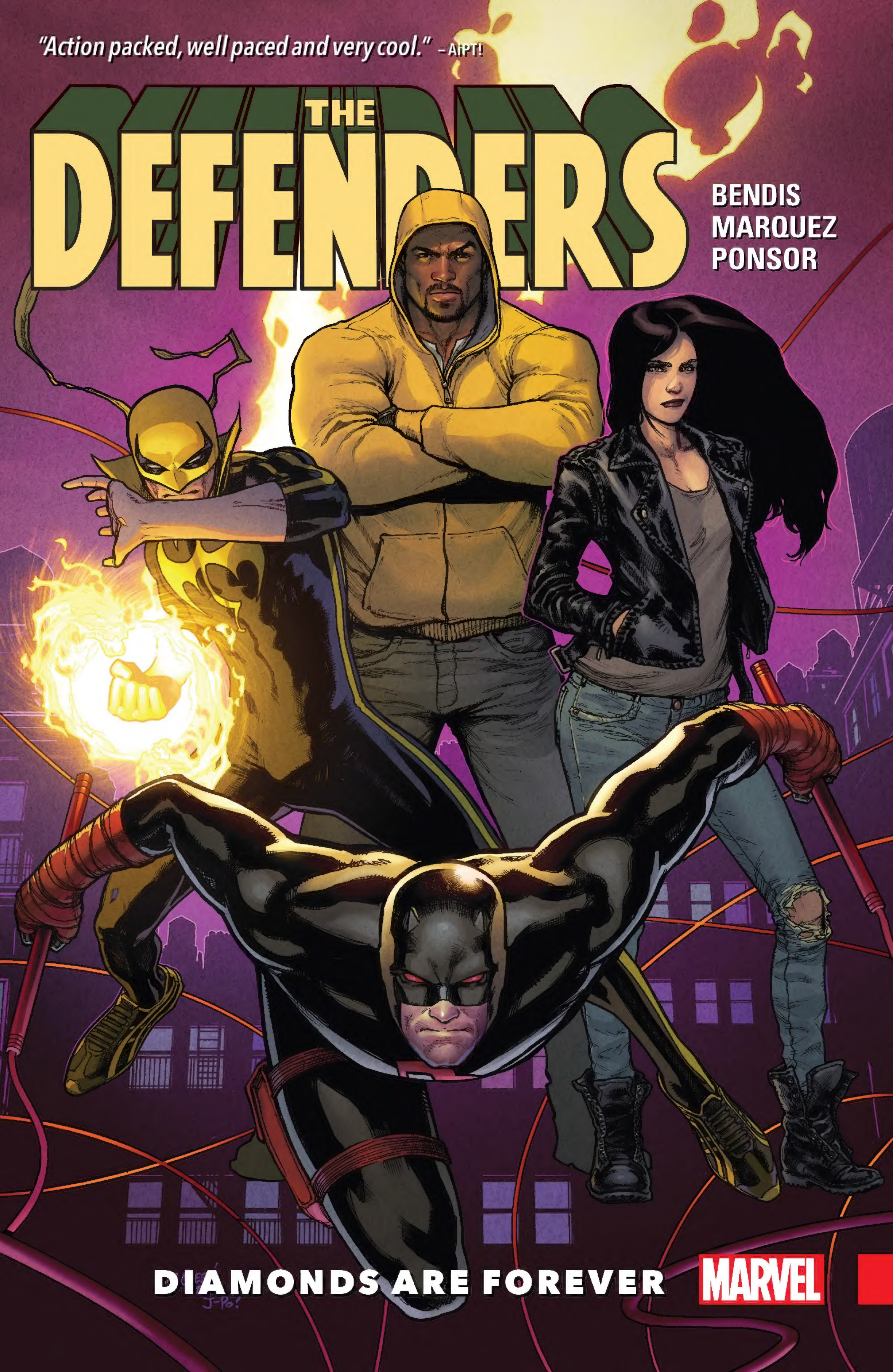

"Action packed, well paced and very cool." – AiPT!

THE DEFENDERS

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MARQUEZ
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DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

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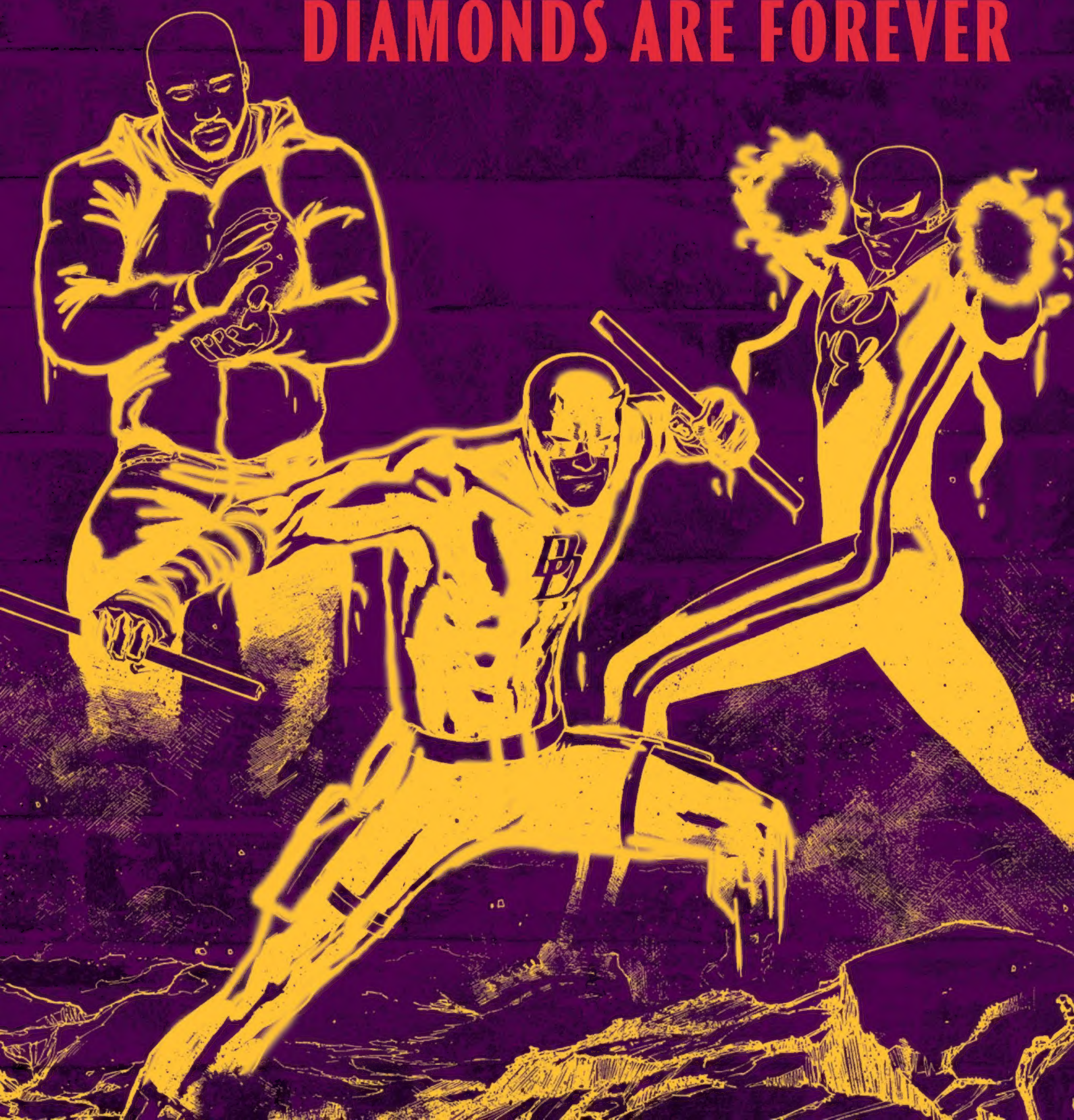
THE DEFENDERS

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER



THE DEFENDERS

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

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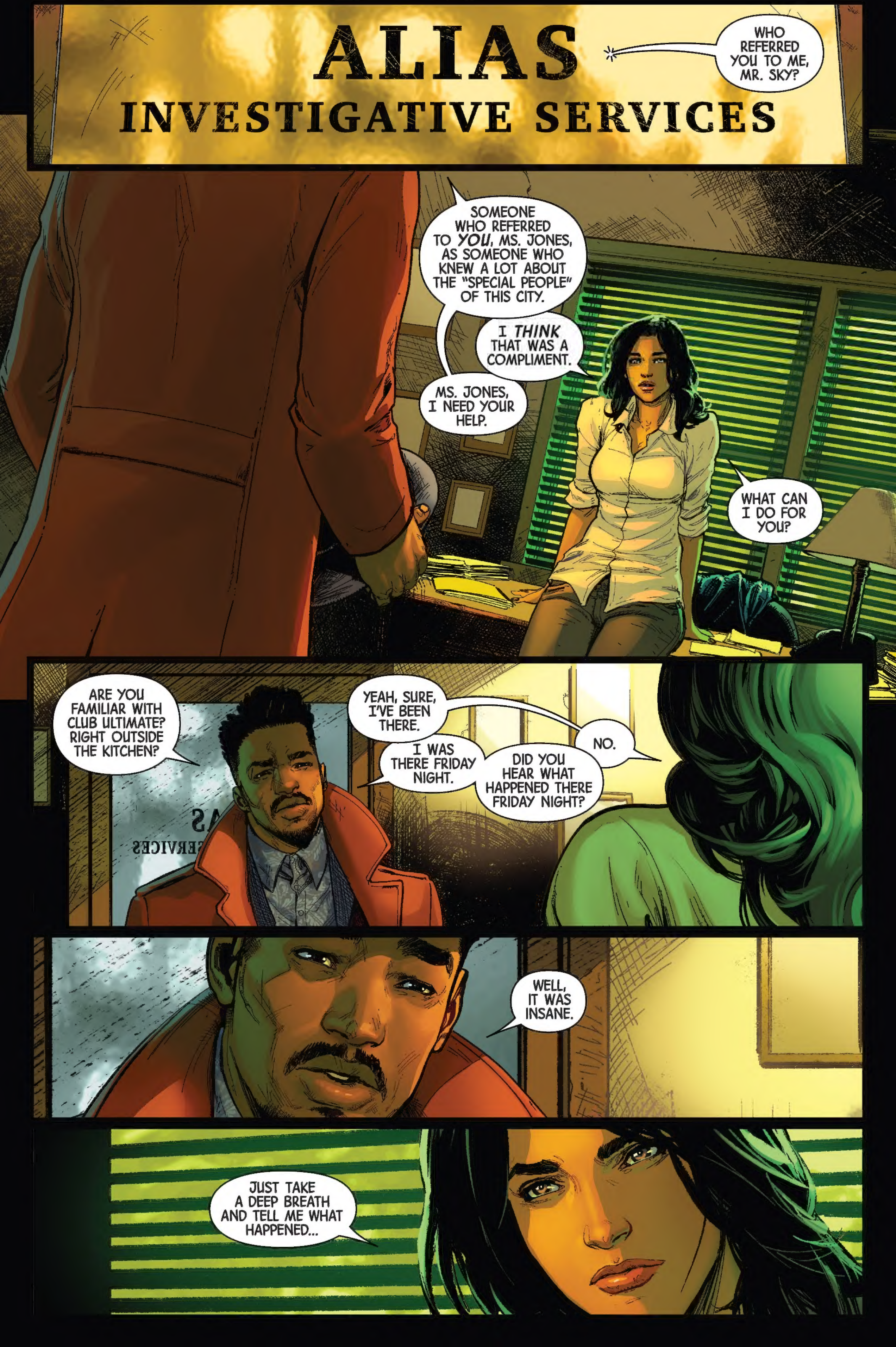
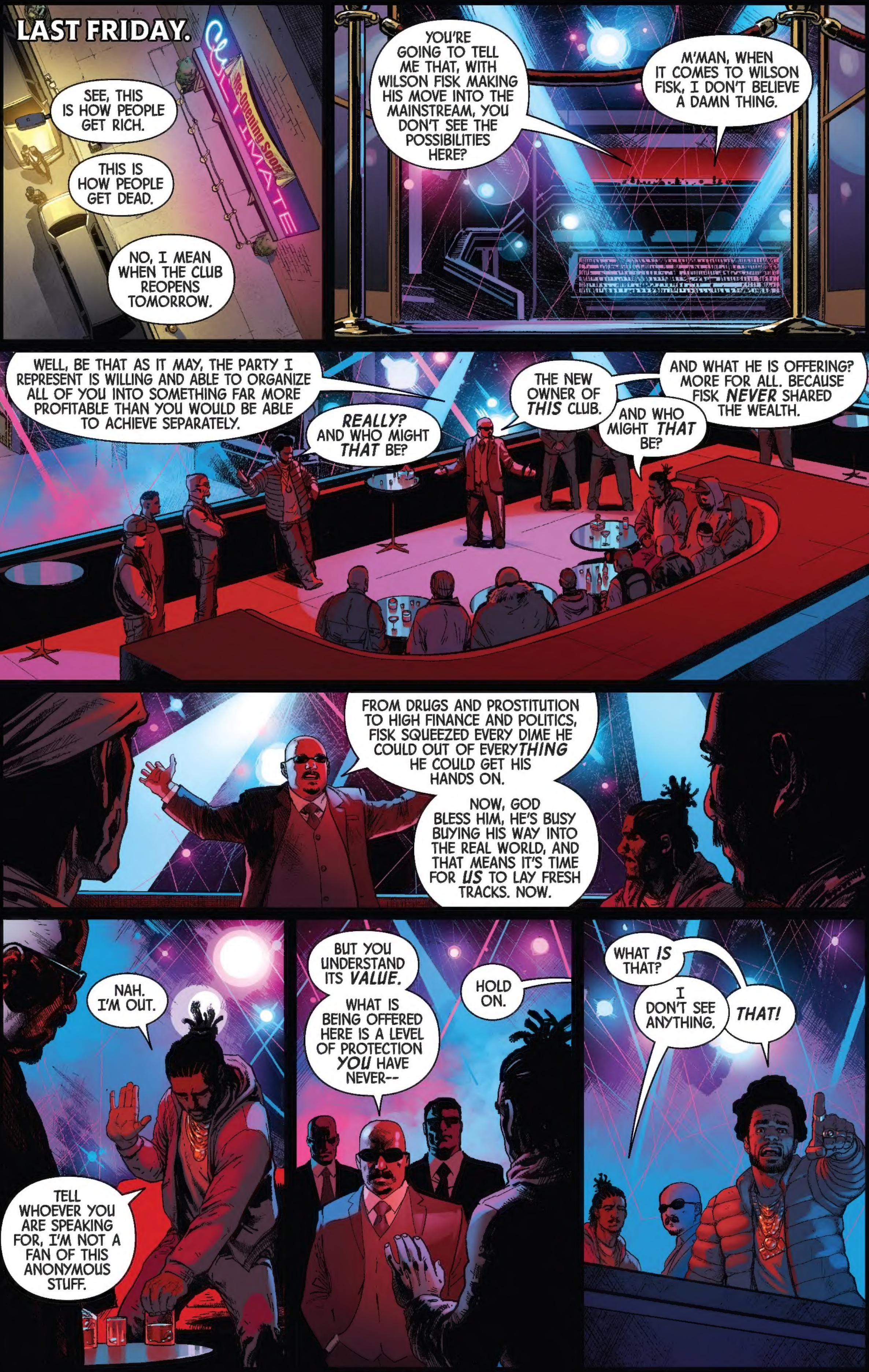
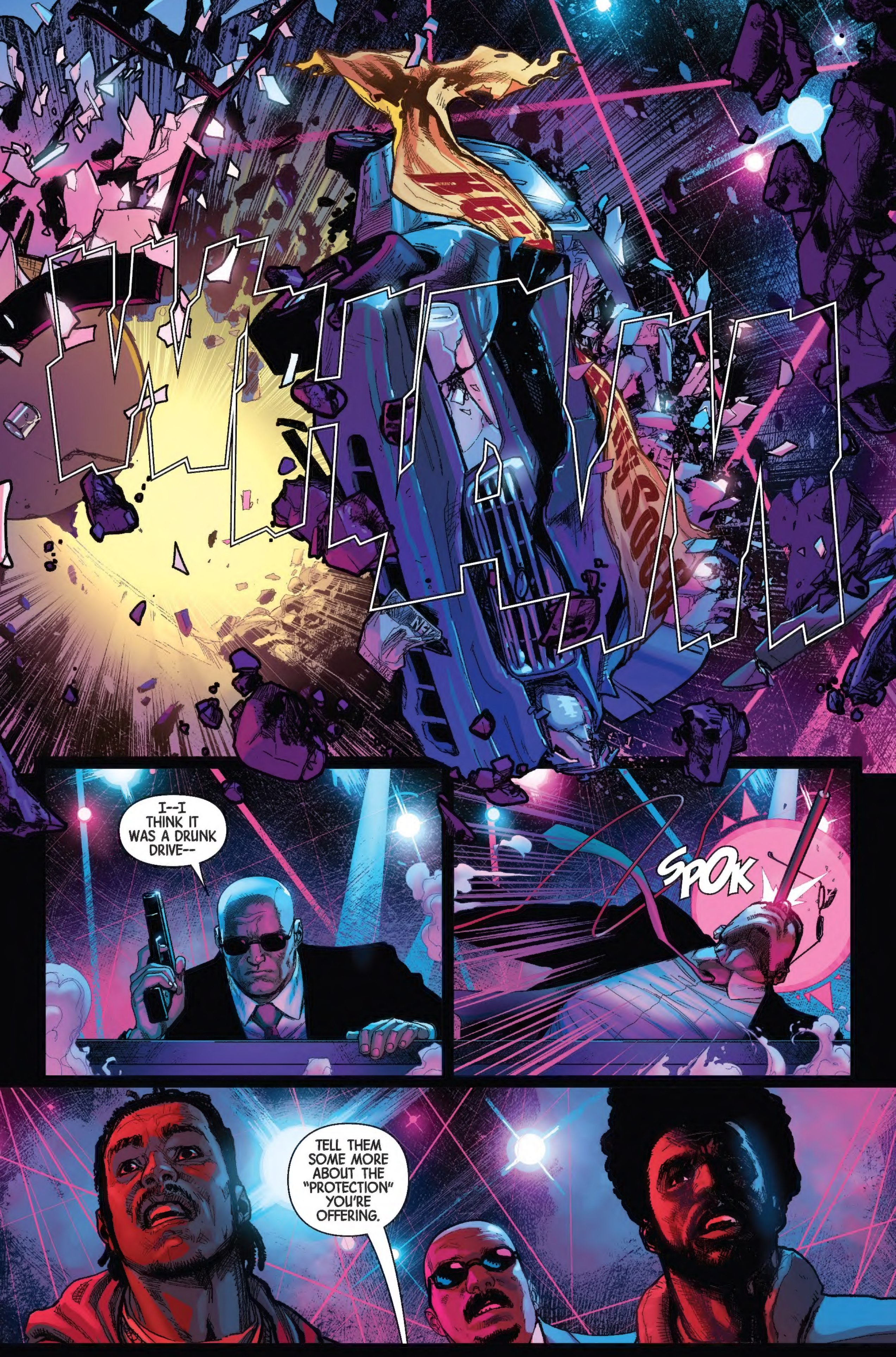
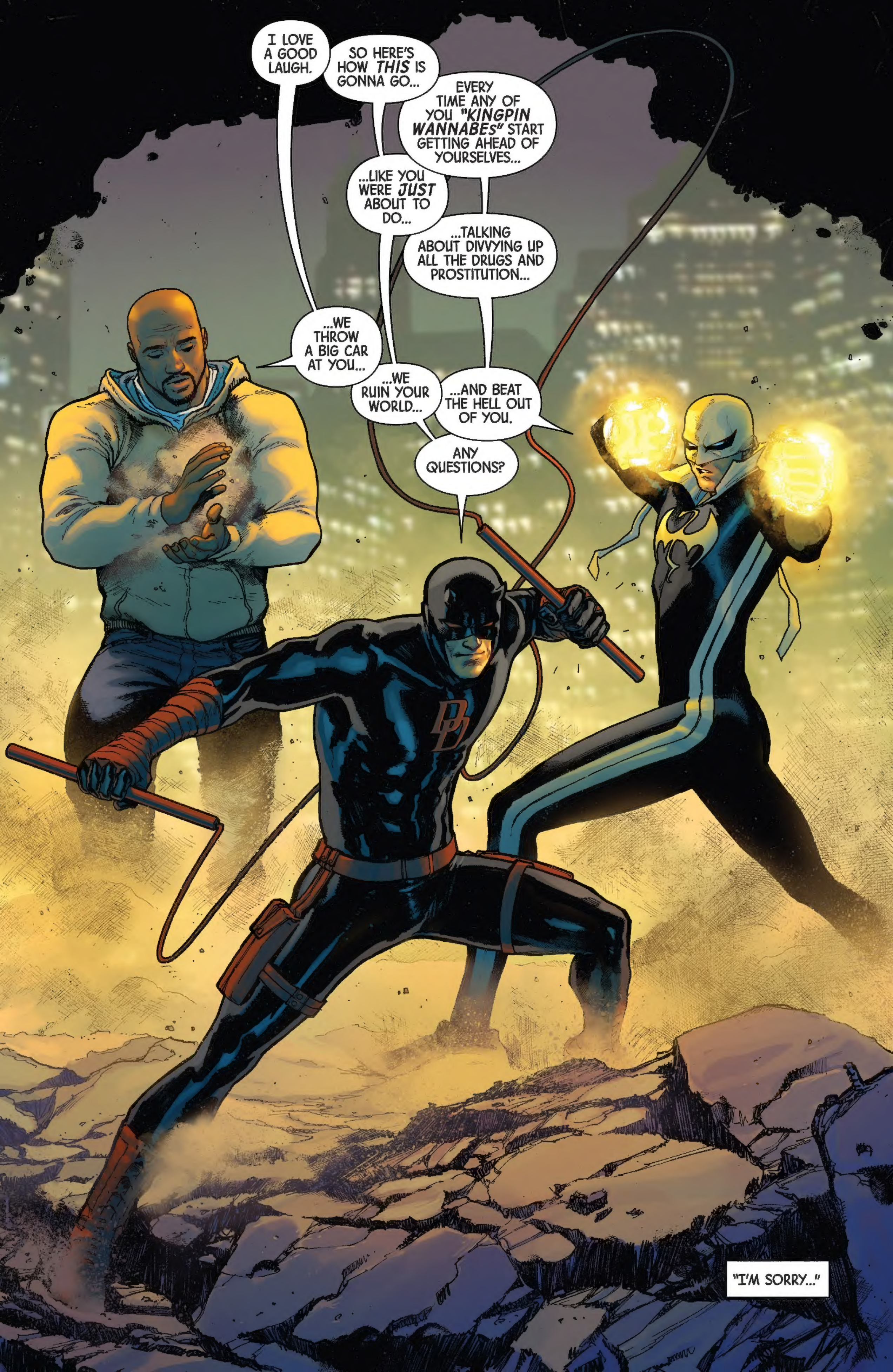
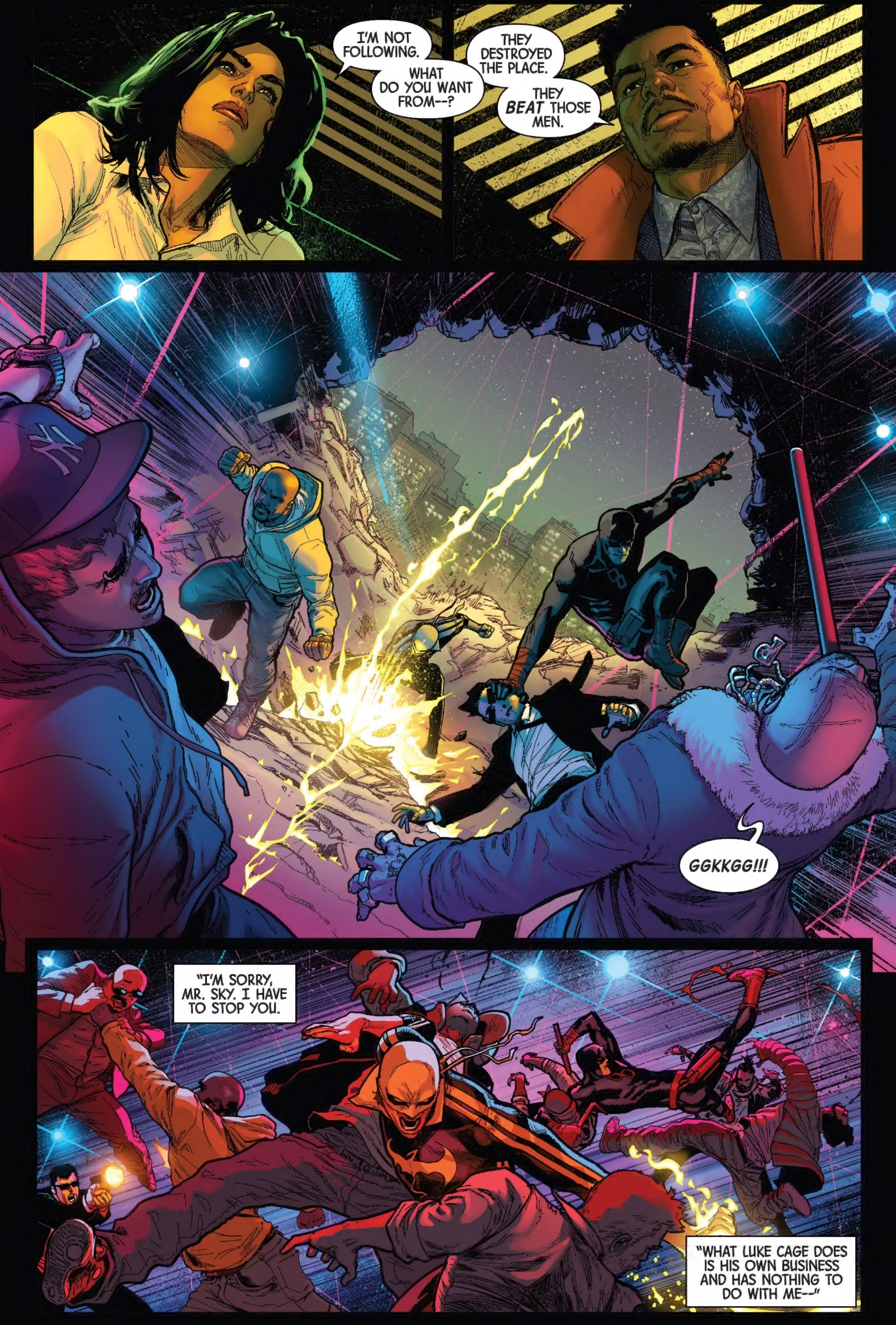
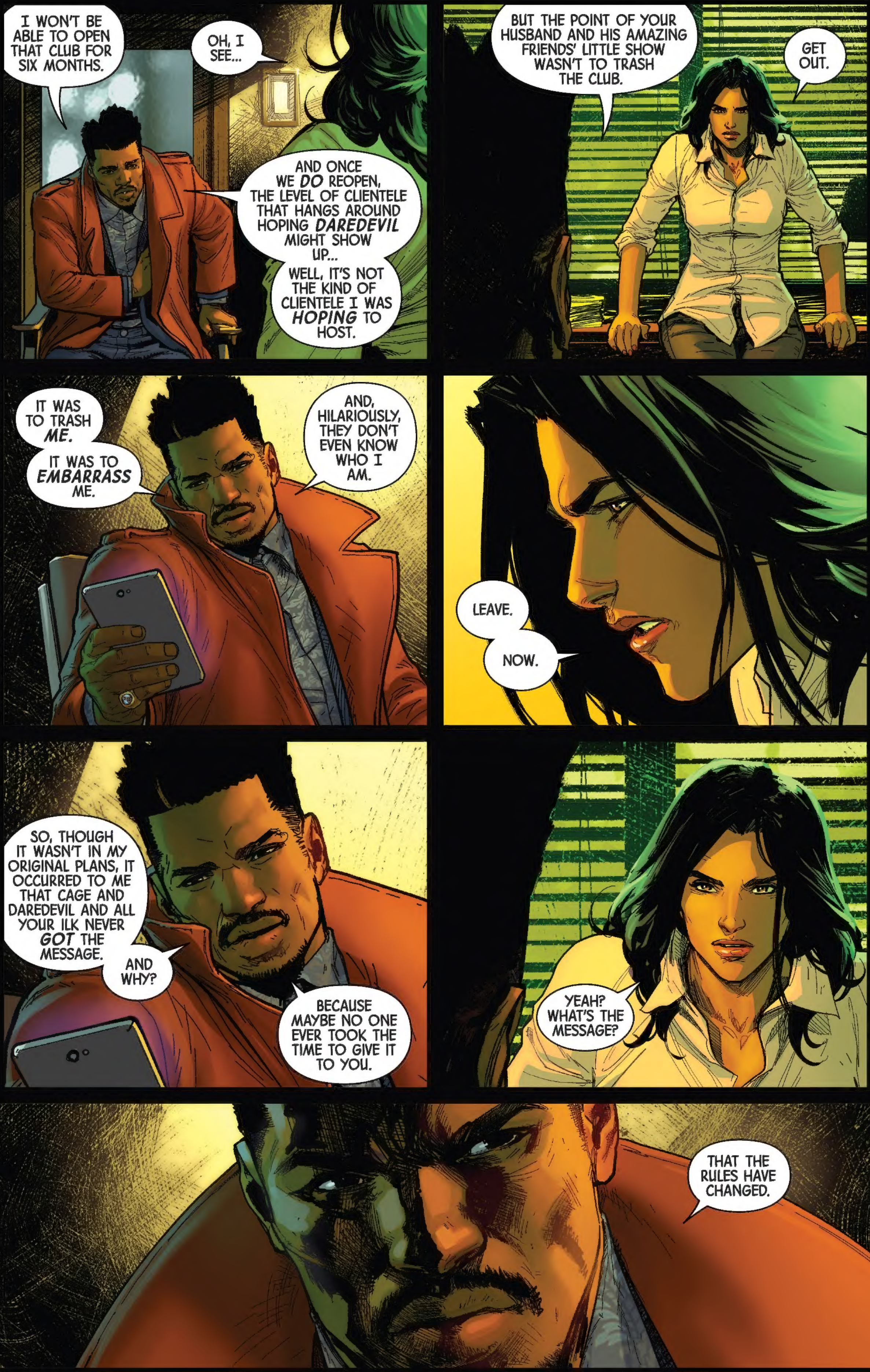

ALIAS INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES
WHO REFERRED YOU TO ME, MR. SKY?
SOMEONE WHO REFERRED TO *YOU*, MS. JONES, AS SOMEONE WHO KNEW A LOT ABOUT THE "SPECIAL PEOPLE" OF THIS CITY.
I *THINK* THAT WAS A COMPLIMENT.
MS. JONES, I NEED YOUR HELP.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH CLUB ULTIMATE? RIGHT OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN?
YEAH, SURE, I'VE BEEN THERE.
I WAS THERE FRIDAY NIGHT.
DID YOU HEAR WHAT HAPPENED THERE FRIDAY NIGHT?
NO.
WELL, IT WAS INSANE.
JUST TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED...

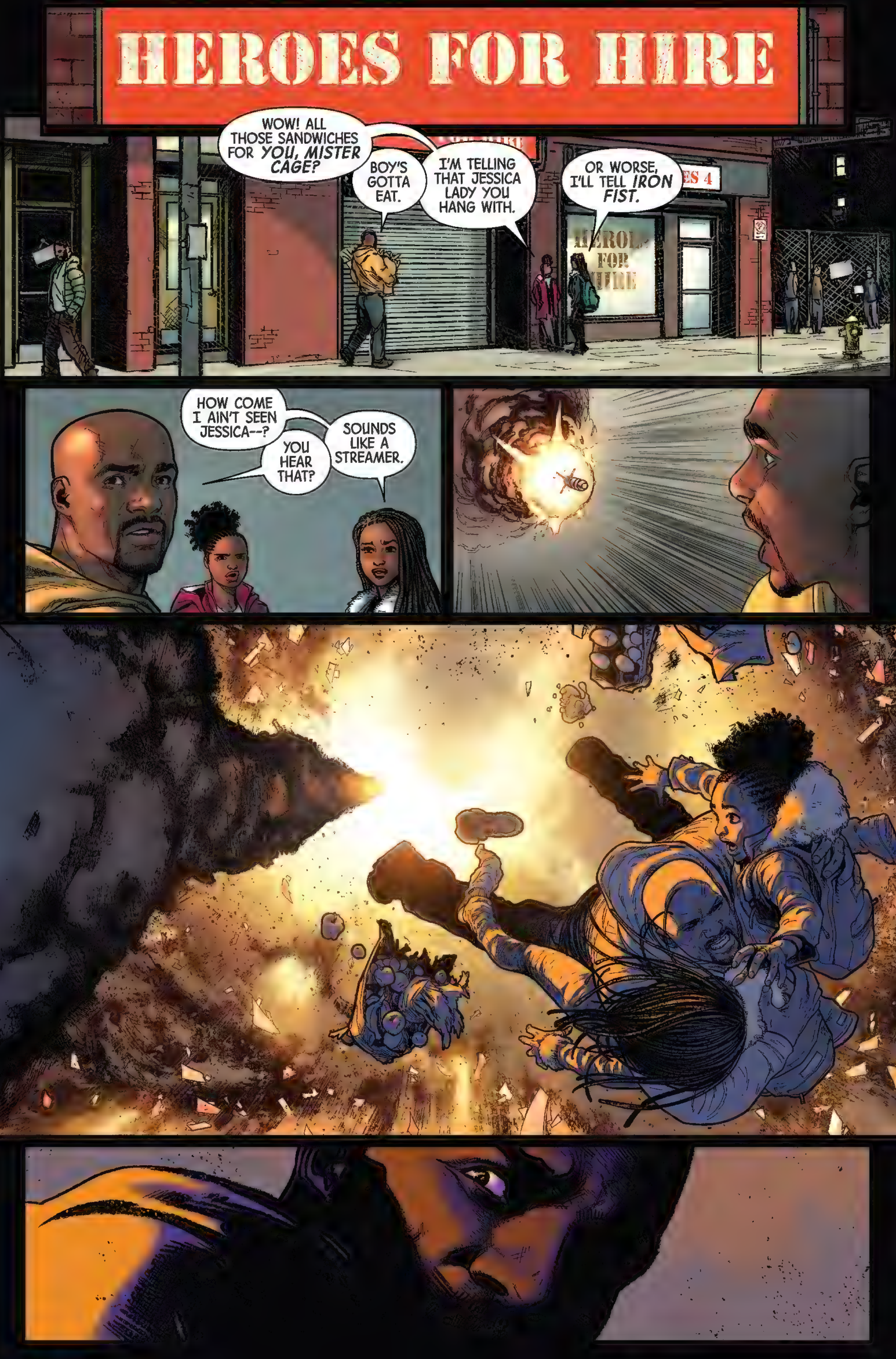

LAST FRIDAY.
ULTIMATE
Re-Opening Soon!
SEE, THIS IS HOW PEOPLE GET RICH.
THIS IS HOW PEOPLE GET DEAD.
NO, I MEAN WHEN THE CLUB REOPENS TOMORROW.
YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME THAT, WITH WILSON FISK MAKING HIS MOVE INTO THE MAINSTREAM, YOU DON'T SEE THE POSSIBILITIES HERE?
M'MAN, WHEN IT COMES TO WILSON FISK, I DON'T BELIEVE A DAMN THING.
WELL, BE THAT AS IT MAY, THE PARTY I REPRESENT IS WILLING AND ABLE TO ORGANIZE ALL OF YOU INTO SOMETHING FAR MORE PROFITABLE THAN YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE SEPARATELY.
REALLY? AND WHO MIGHT *THAT* BE?
THE NEW OWNER OF *THIS* CLUB.
AND WHO MIGHT *THAT* BE?
AND WHAT HE IS OFFERING? MORE FOR ALL. BECAUSE FISK *NEVER* SHARED THE WEALTH.
FROM DRUGS AND PROSTITUTION TO HIGH FINANCE AND POLITICS, FISK SQUEEZED EVERY DIME HE COULD OUT OF EVERY*THING* HE COULD GET HIS HANDS ON.
NOW, GOD BLESS HIM, HE'S BUSY BUYING HIS WAY INTO THE REAL WORLD, AND THAT MEANS IT'S TIME FOR *US* TO LAY FRESH TRACKS. NOW.
NAH. I'M OUT.
TELL WHOEVER YOU ARE SPEAKING FOR, I'M NOT A FAN OF THIS ANONYMOUS STUFF.
BUT YOU UNDERSTAND ITS *VALUE.*
WHAT IS BEING OFFERED HERE IS A LEVEL OF PROTECTION *YOU* HAVE NEVER--
HOLD ON.
WHAT *IS* THAT?
I DON'T SEE ANYTHING.
THAT!

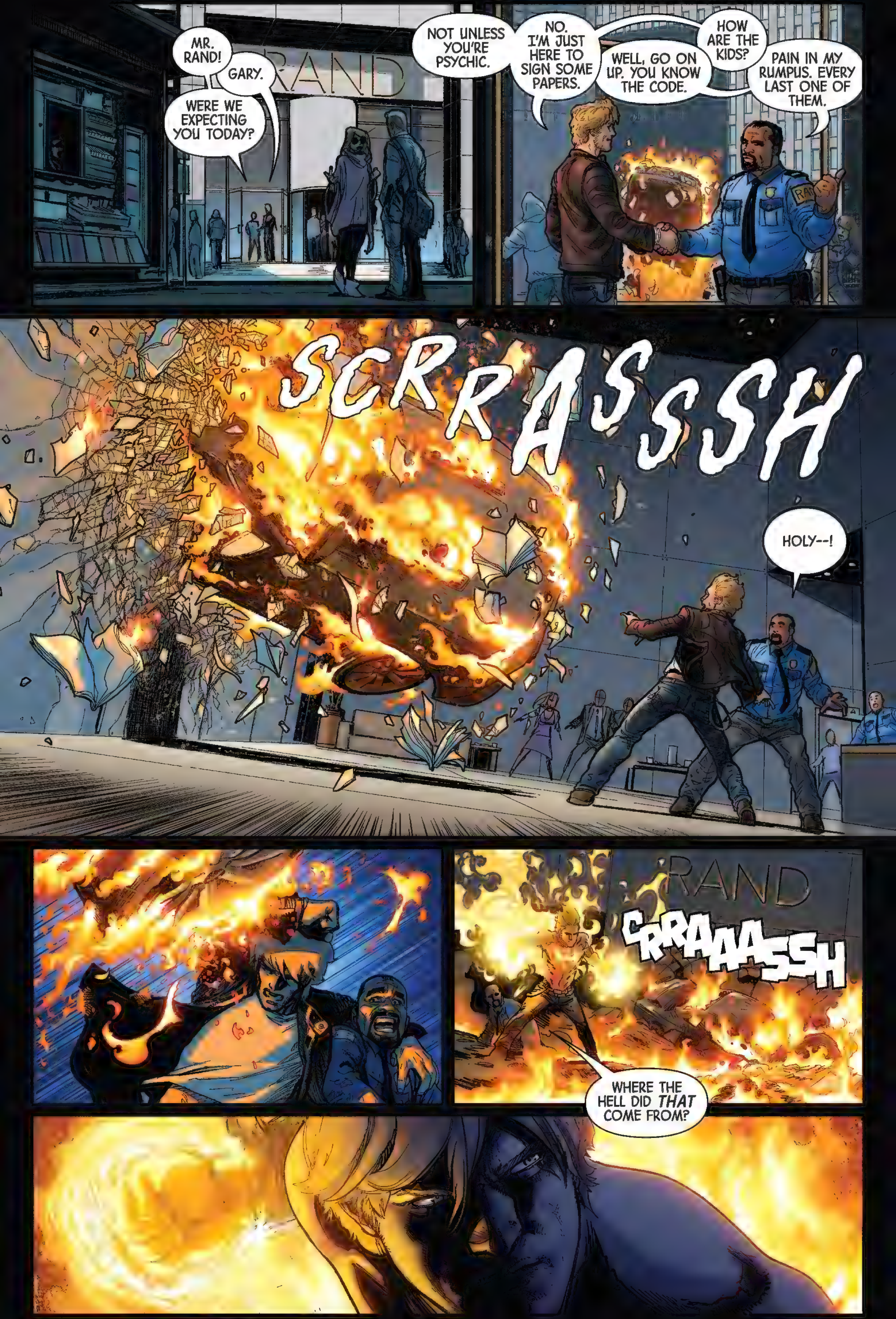

I--I THINK IT WAS A DRUNK DRIVE--
SPOK
TELL THEM SOME MORE ABOUT THE "PROTECTION" YOU'RE OFFERING.

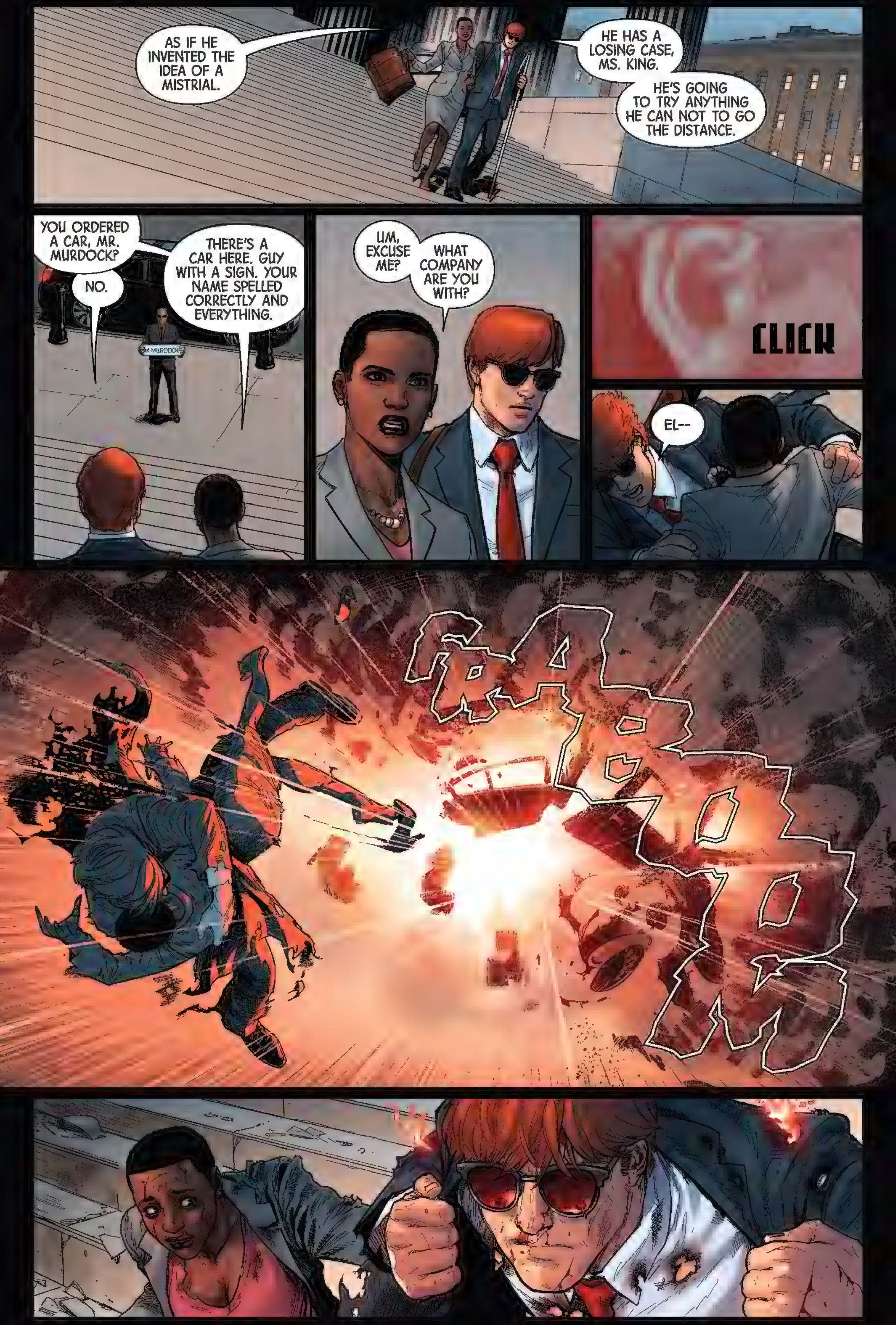

I LOVE A GOOD LAUGH.
SO HERE'S HOW *THIS* IS GONNA GO...
EVERY TIME ANY OF YOU *"KINGPIN WANNABES"* START GETTING AHEAD OF YOURSELVES...
...LIKE YOU WERE *JUST* ABOUT TO DO...
...TALKING ABOUT DIVVYING UP ALL THE DRUGS AND PROSTITUTION...
...WE THROW A BIG CAR AT YOU...
...WE RUIN YOUR WORLD...
...AND BEAT THE HELL OUT OF YOU.
ANY QUESTIONS?
"I'M SORRY..."

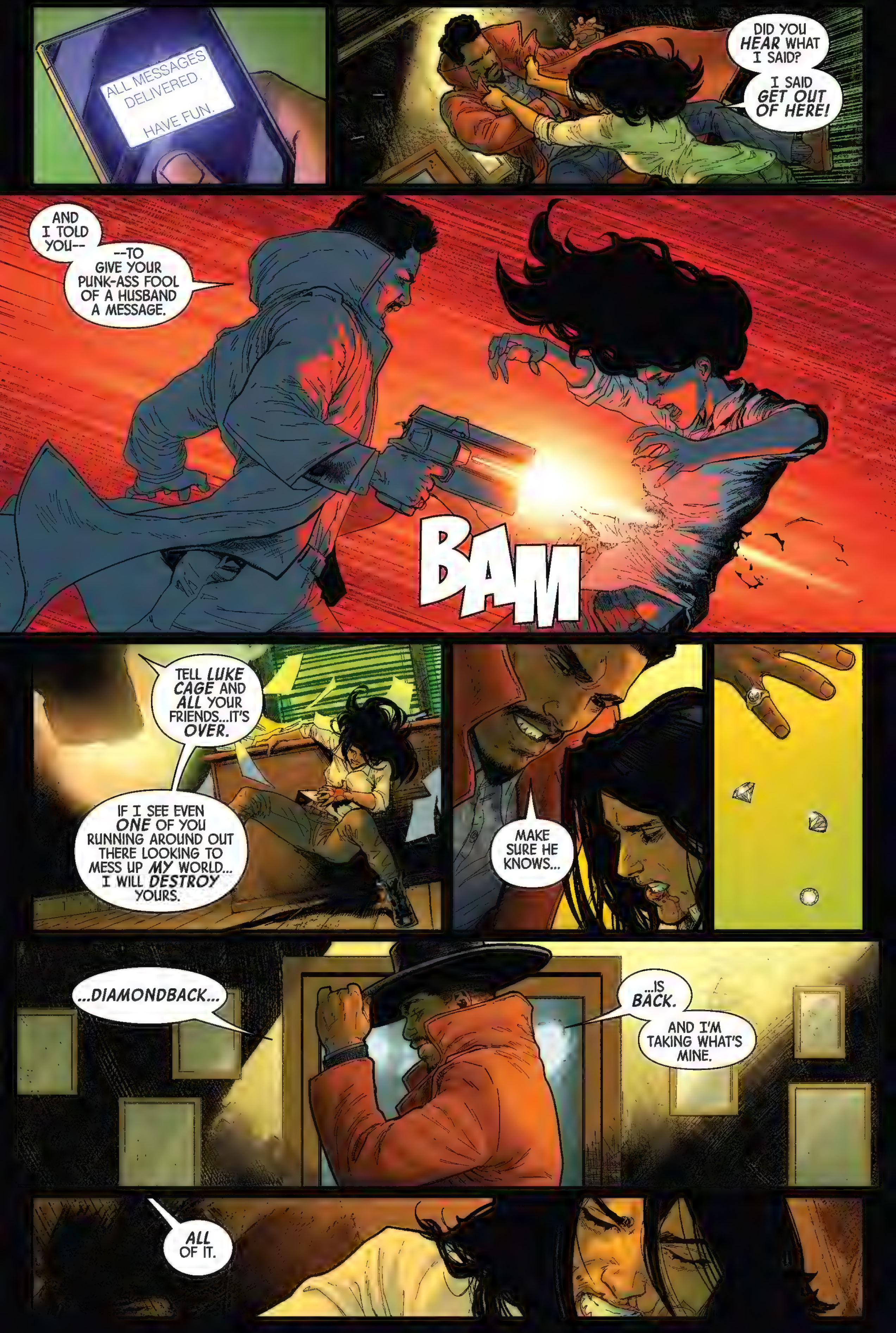

I'M NOT FOLLOWING.
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM--?
THEY DESTROYED THE PLACE.
THEY *BEAT* THOSE MEN.
GGKKGG!!!
"I'M SORRY, MR. SKY. I HAVE TO STOP YOU.
"WHAT LUKE CAGE DOES IS HIS OWN BUSINESS AND HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME--"


I WON'T BE ABLE TO OPEN THAT CLUB FOR SIX MONTHS.
OH, I SEE...
AND ONCE WE *DO* REOPEN, THE LEVEL OF CLIENTELE THAT HANGS AROUND HOPING ***DAREDEVIL*** MIGHT SHOW UP...
WELL, IT'S NOT THE KIND OF CLIENTELE I WAS ***HOPING*** TO HOST.
BUT THE POINT OF YOUR HUSBAND AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS' LITTLE SHOW WASN'T TO TRASH THE CLUB.
GET OUT.
IT WAS TO TRASH ***ME.***
IT WAS TO ***EMBARRASS*** ME.
AND, HILARIOUSLY, THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO I AM.
LEAVE.
NOW.
SO, THOUGH IT WASN'T IN *MY* ORIGINAL PLANS, IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT CAGE AND DAREDEVIL AND ALL YOUR ILK NEVER ***GOT*** THE MESSAGE.
AND WHY?
BECAUSE MAYBE NO ONE EVER TOOK THE TIME TO GIVE IT TO YOU.
YEAH? WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?
THAT THE RULES HAVE CHANGED.


HEROES FOR HIRE
WOW! ALL THOSE SANDWICHES FOR *YOU, MISTER CAGE?*
BOY'S GOTTA EAT.
I'M TELLING THAT JESSICA LADY YOU HANG WITH.
OR WORSE, I'LL TELL *IRON FIST.*
ES 4
HEROES FOR HIRE
HOW COME I AIN'T SEEN JESSICA--?
YOU HEAR THAT?
SOUNDS LIKE A STREAMER.


RAND
MR. RAND!
GARY.
WERE WE EXPECTING YOU TODAY?
NOT UNLESS YOU'RE PSYCHIC.
NO. I'M JUST HERE TO SIGN SOME PAPERS.
WELL, GO ON UP. YOU KNOW THE CODE.
HOW ARE THE KIDS?
PAIN IN MY RUMPUS. EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM.
SCRRASSSH
HOLY--!
RAND
CRRAAASSH
WHERE THE HELL DID *THAT* COME FROM?


AS IF HE INVENTED THE IDEA OF A MISTRIAL.
HE HAS A LOSING CASE, MS. KING.
HE'S GOING TO TRY ANYTHING HE CAN NOT TO GO THE DISTANCE.
YOU ORDERED A CAR, MR. MURDOCK?
NO.
THERE'S A CAR HERE. GUY WITH A SIGN. YOUR NAME SPELLED CORRECTLY AND EVERYTHING.
M MURDOCK
UM, EXCUSE ME?
WHAT COMPANY ARE YOU WITH?
CLICK
EL--
KRABOOM


ALL MESSAGES DELIVERED. HAVE FUN.
DID YOU *HEAR* WHAT I SAID?
I SAID *GET OUT OF HERE!*
AND I TOLD YOU--
--TO GIVE YOUR PUNK-ASS FOOL OF A HUSBAND A MESSAGE.
BAM
TELL *LUKE CAGE* AND *ALL* YOUR FRIENDS...IT'S *OVER.*
IF I SEE EVEN *ONE* OF YOU RUNNING AROUND OUT THERE LOOKING TO MESS UP *MY* WORLD... I WILL *DESTROY* YOURS.
MAKE SURE HE KNOWS...
...DIAMONDBACK...
...IS *BACK.*
AND I'M TAKING WHAT'S MINE.
ALL OF IT.

DAREDEVIL · LUKE CAGE · JESSICA JONES · IRON FIST
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THE DEFENDERS™ #1
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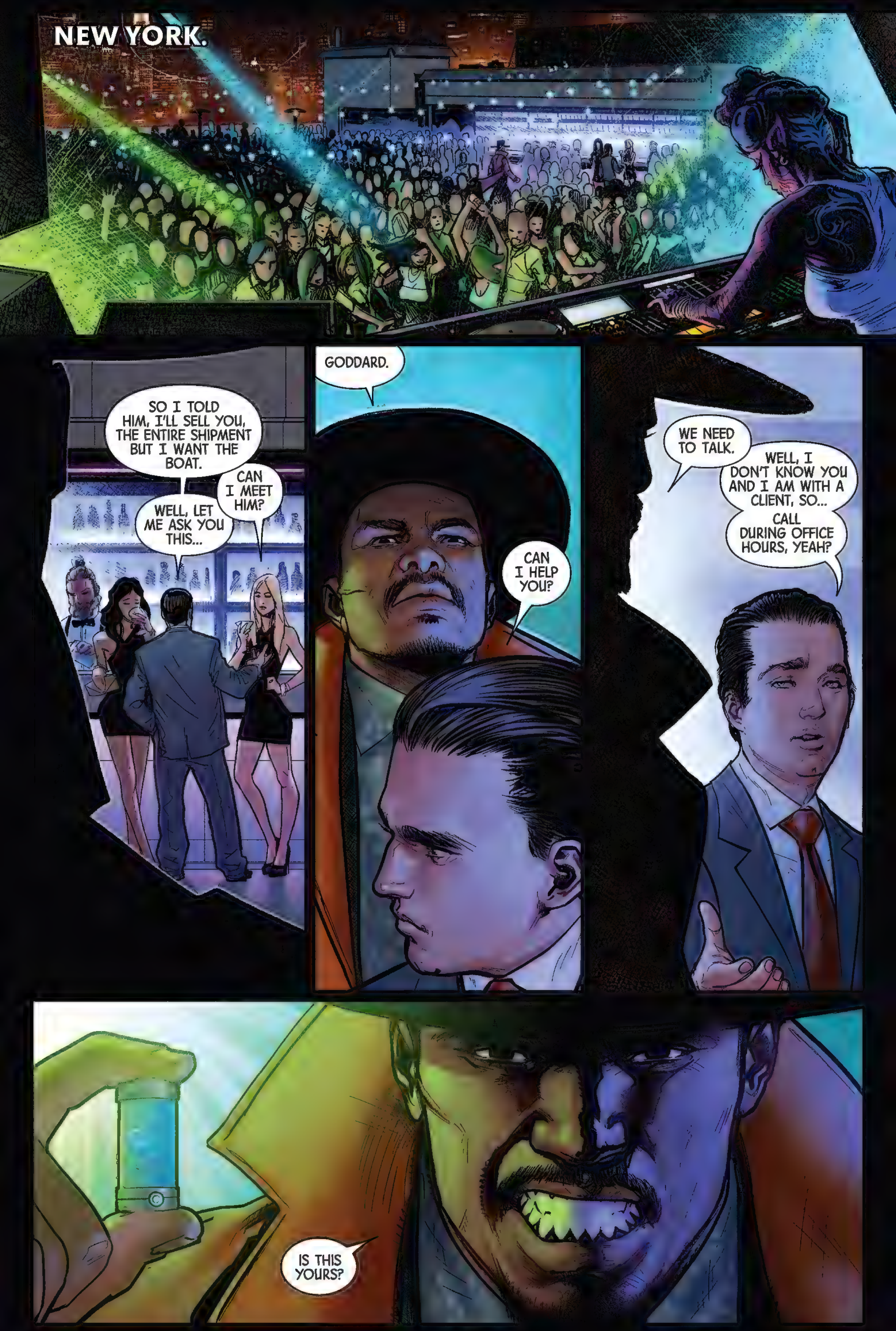
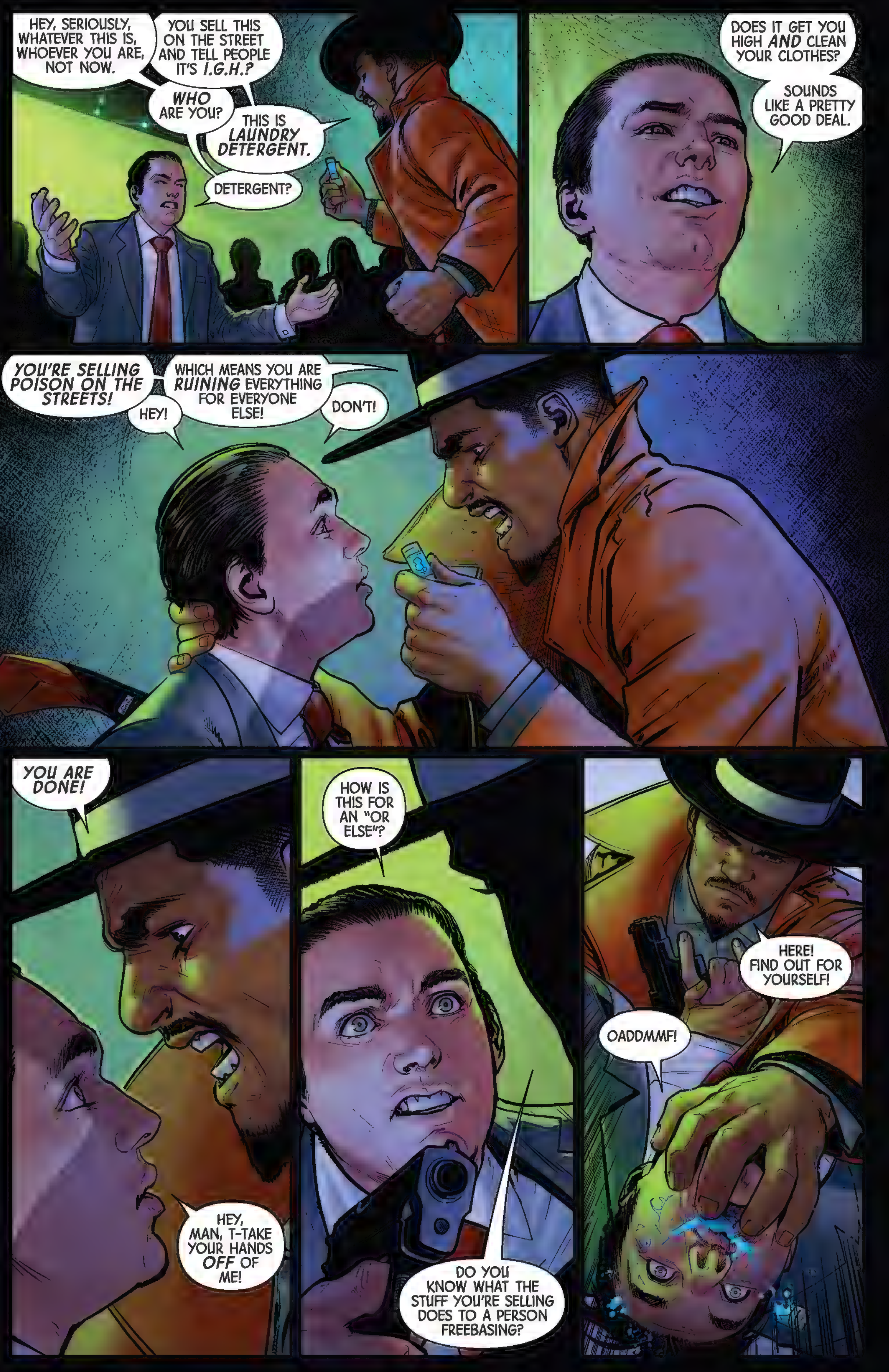
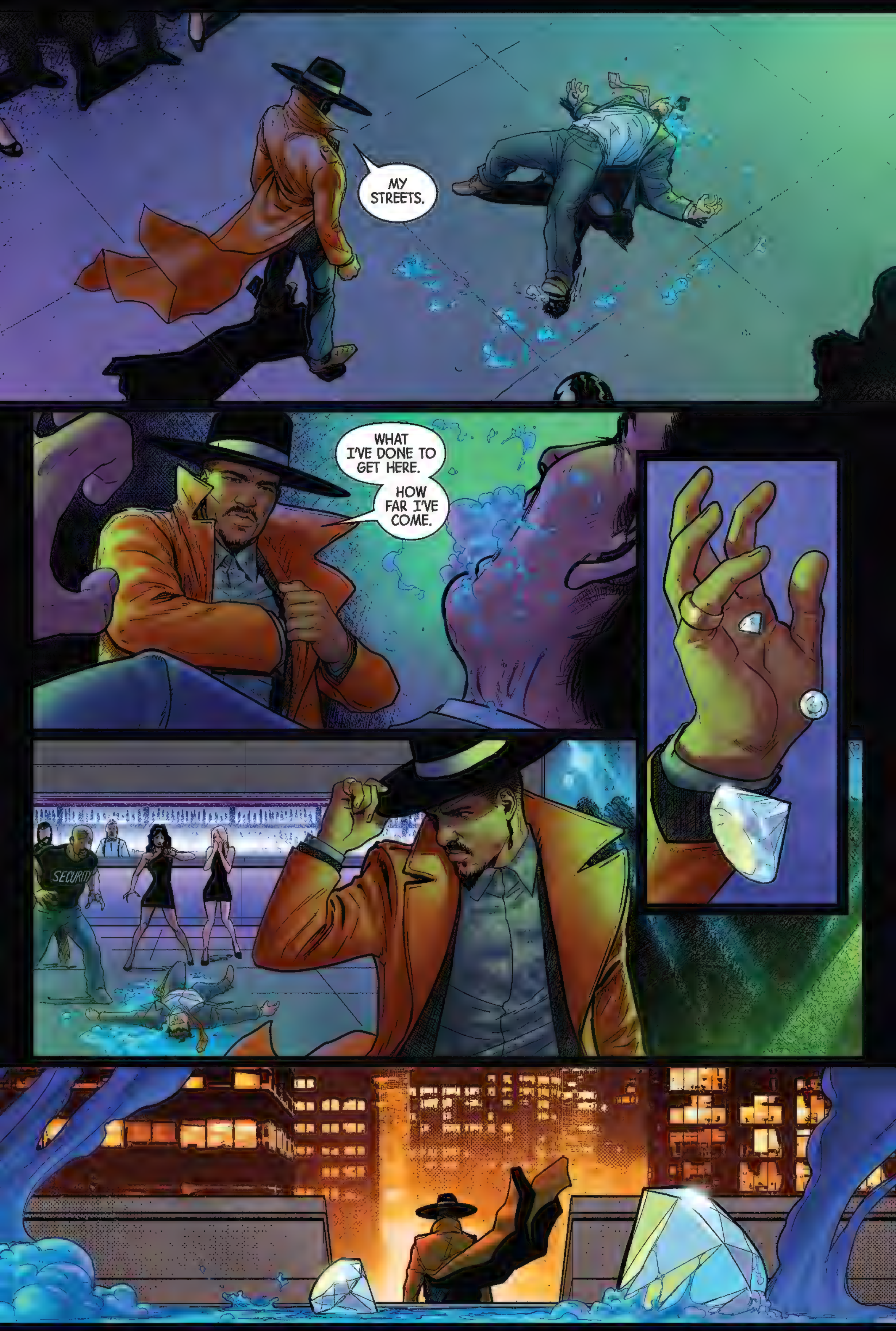
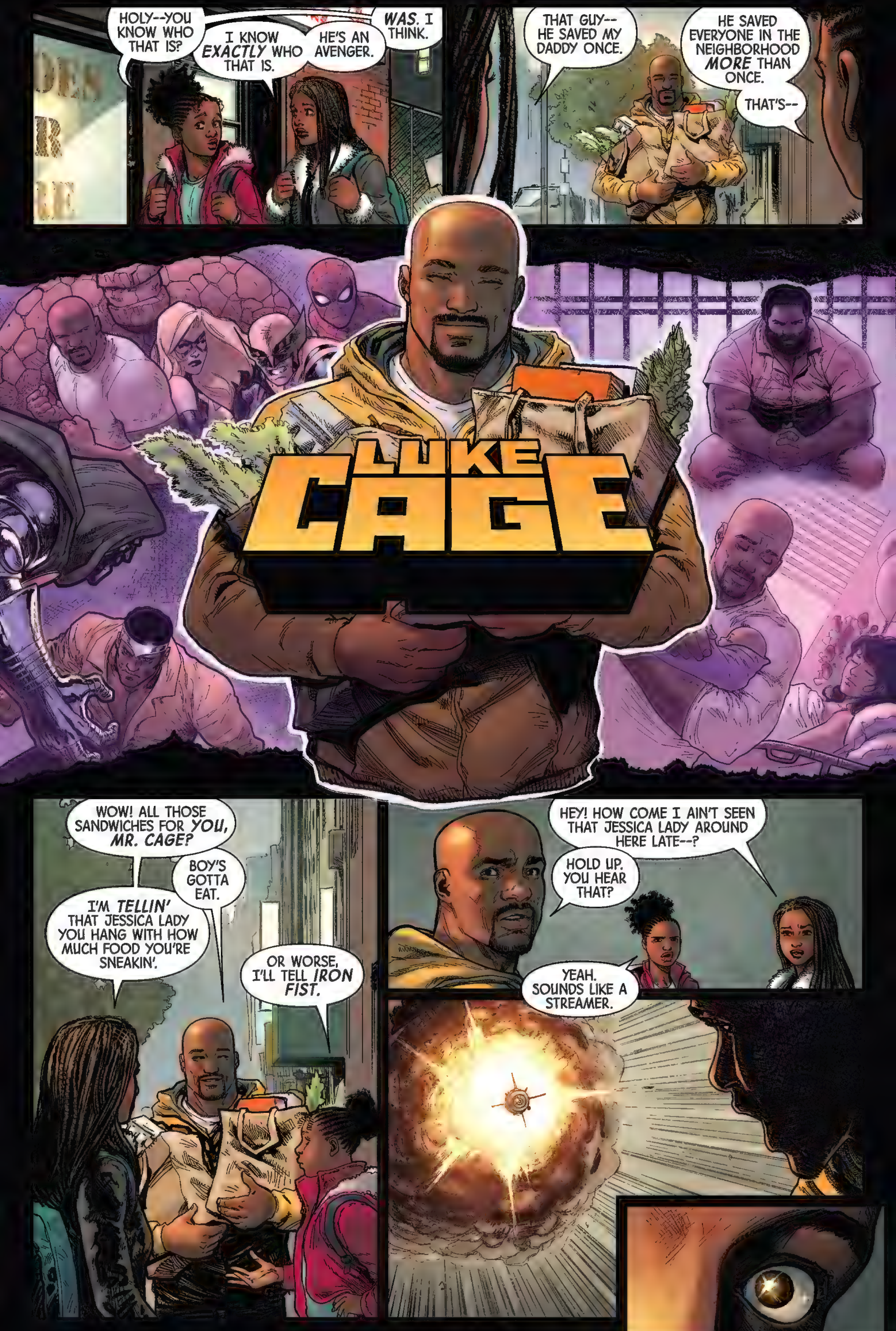
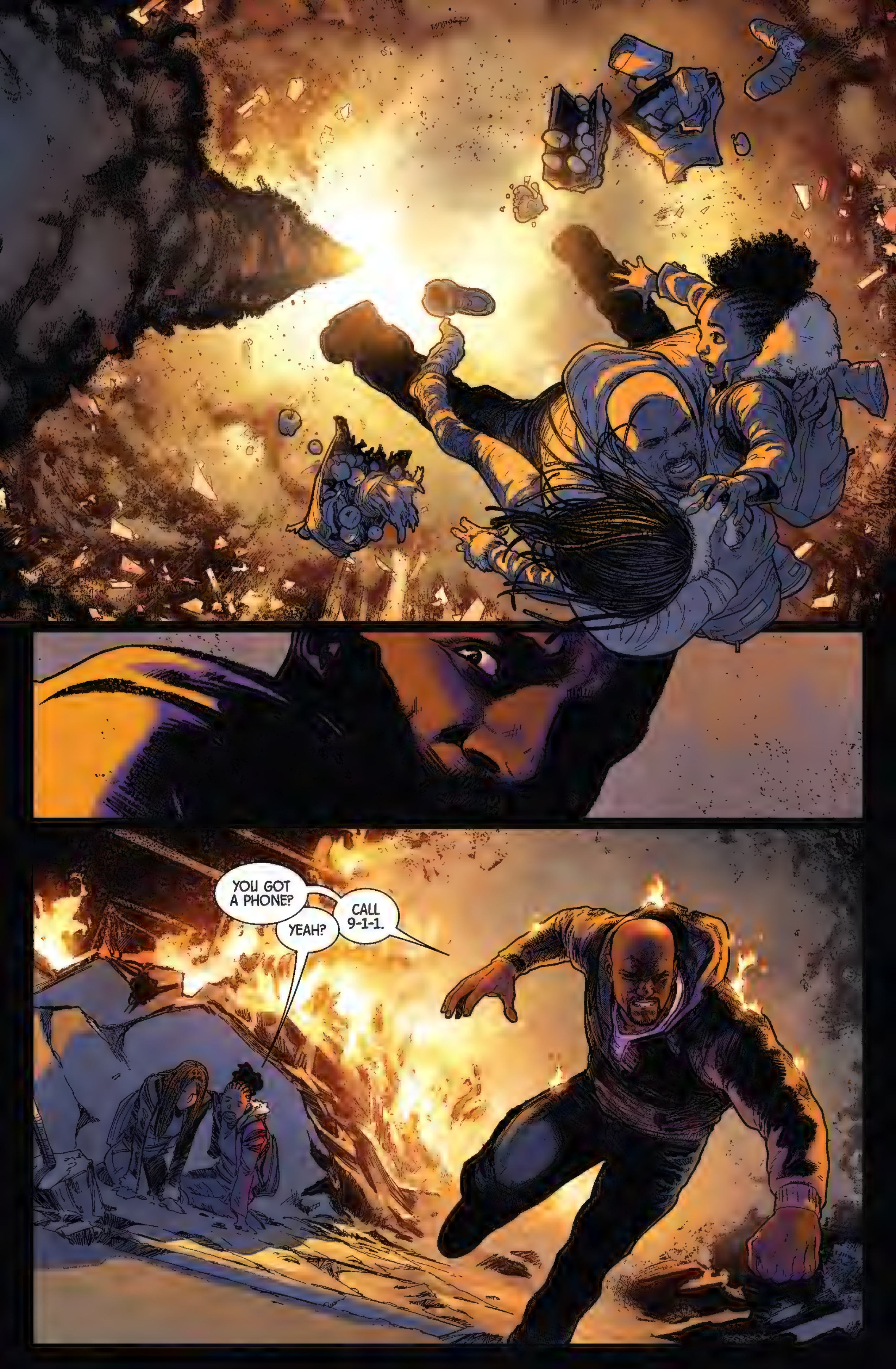
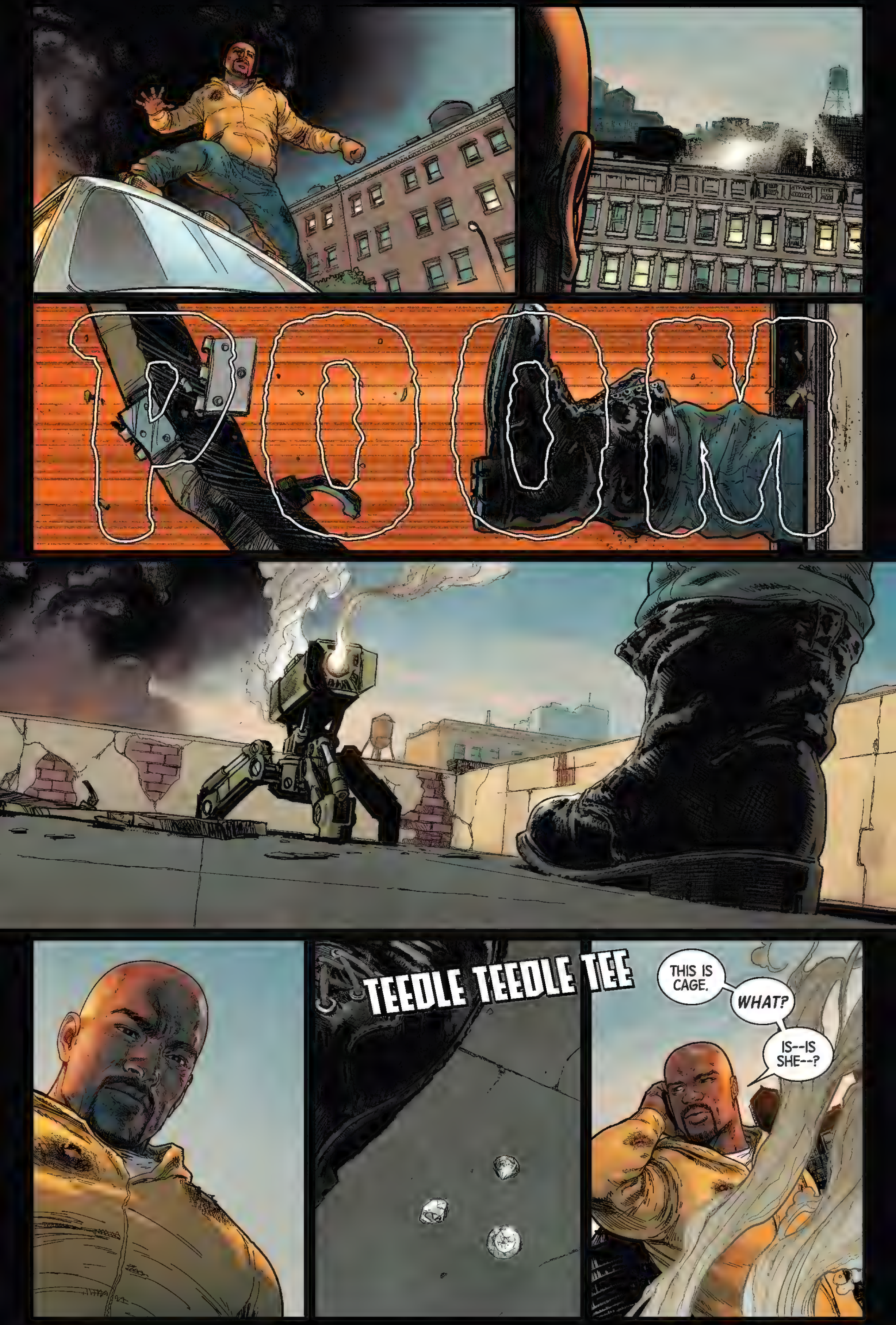

NEW YORK.
SO I TOLD HIM, I'LL SELL YOU, THE ENTIRE SHIPMENT BUT I WANT THE BOAT.
WELL, LET ME ASK YOU THIS...
CAN I MEET HIM?
GODDARD.
CAN I HELP YOU?
WE NEED TO TALK.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW YOU AND I AM WITH A CLIENT, SO...
CALL DURING OFFICE HOURS, YEAH?
IS THIS YOURS?


HEY, SERIOUSLY, WHATEVER THIS IS, WHOEVER YOU ARE, NOT NOW.
YOU SELL THIS ON THE STREET AND TELL PEOPLE IT'S *I.G.H.?*
WHO ARE YOU?
THIS IS *LAUNDRY DETERGENT.*
DETERGENT?
DOES IT GET YOU HIGH *AND* CLEAN YOUR CLOTHES?
SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY GOOD DEAL.
YOU'RE SELLING POISON ON THE STREETS!
HEY!
WHICH MEANS YOU ARE *RUINING* EVERYTHING FOR EVERYONE ELSE!
DON'T!
YOU ARE DONE!
HEY, MAN, T-TAKE YOUR HANDS *OFF* OF ME!
HOW IS THIS FOR AN "OR ELSE"?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE STUFF YOU'RE SELLING DOES TO A PERSON FREEBASING?
HERE! FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF!
OADDMMF!


MY STREETS.
WHAT I'VE DONE TO GET HERE.
HOW FAR I'VE COME.
SECURIT

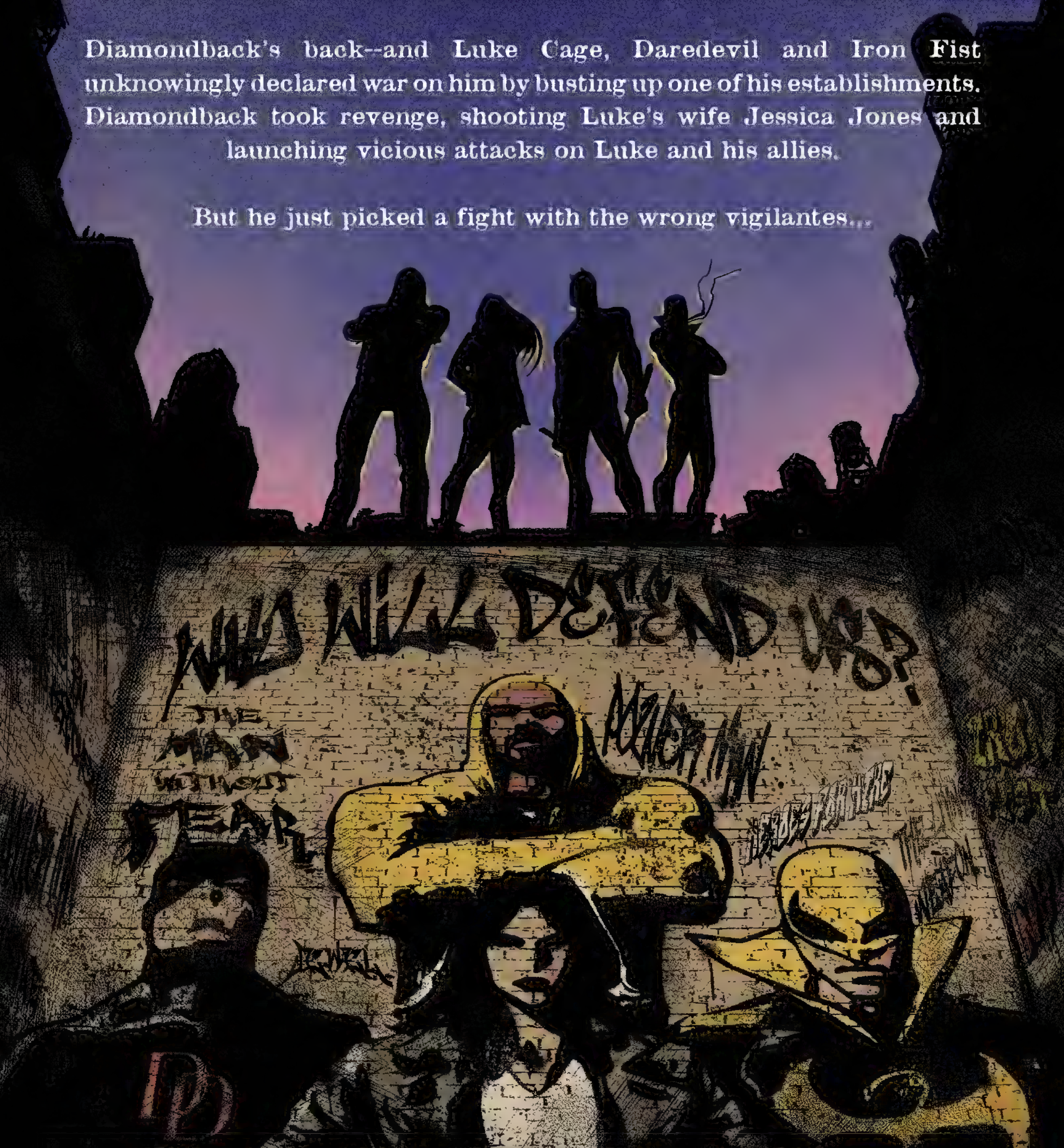

HOLY--YOU KNOW WHO THAT IS?
I KNOW *EXACTLY* WHO THAT IS.
HE'S AN AVENGER.
WAS, I THINK.
THAT GUY--HE SAVED MY DADDY ONCE.
HE SAVED EVERYONE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD *MORE* THAN ONCE.
THAT'S--
LUKE CAGE
WOW! ALL THOSE SANDWICHES FOR *YOU, MR. CAGE?*
BOY'S GOTTA EAT.
I'M *TELLIN'* THAT JESSICA LADY YOU HANG WITH HOW MUCH FOOD YOU'RE SNEAKIN'.
OR WORSE, I'LL TELL *IRON FIST.*
HEY! HOW COME I AIN'T SEEN THAT JESSICA LADY AROUND HERE LATE--?
HOLD UP. YOU HEAR THAT?
YEAH. SOUNDS LIKE A STREAMER.


YOU GOT A PHONE?
YEAH?
CALL 9-1-1.


POOM
TEEDLE TEEDLE TEE
THIS IS CAGE.
WHAT?
IS--IS SHE--?

Diamondback's back--and Luke Cage, Daredevil and Iron Fist unknowingly declared war on him by busting up one of his establishments. Diamondback took revenge, shooting Luke's wife Jessica Jones and launching vicious attacks on Luke and his allies.

But he just picked a fight with the wrong vigilantes...



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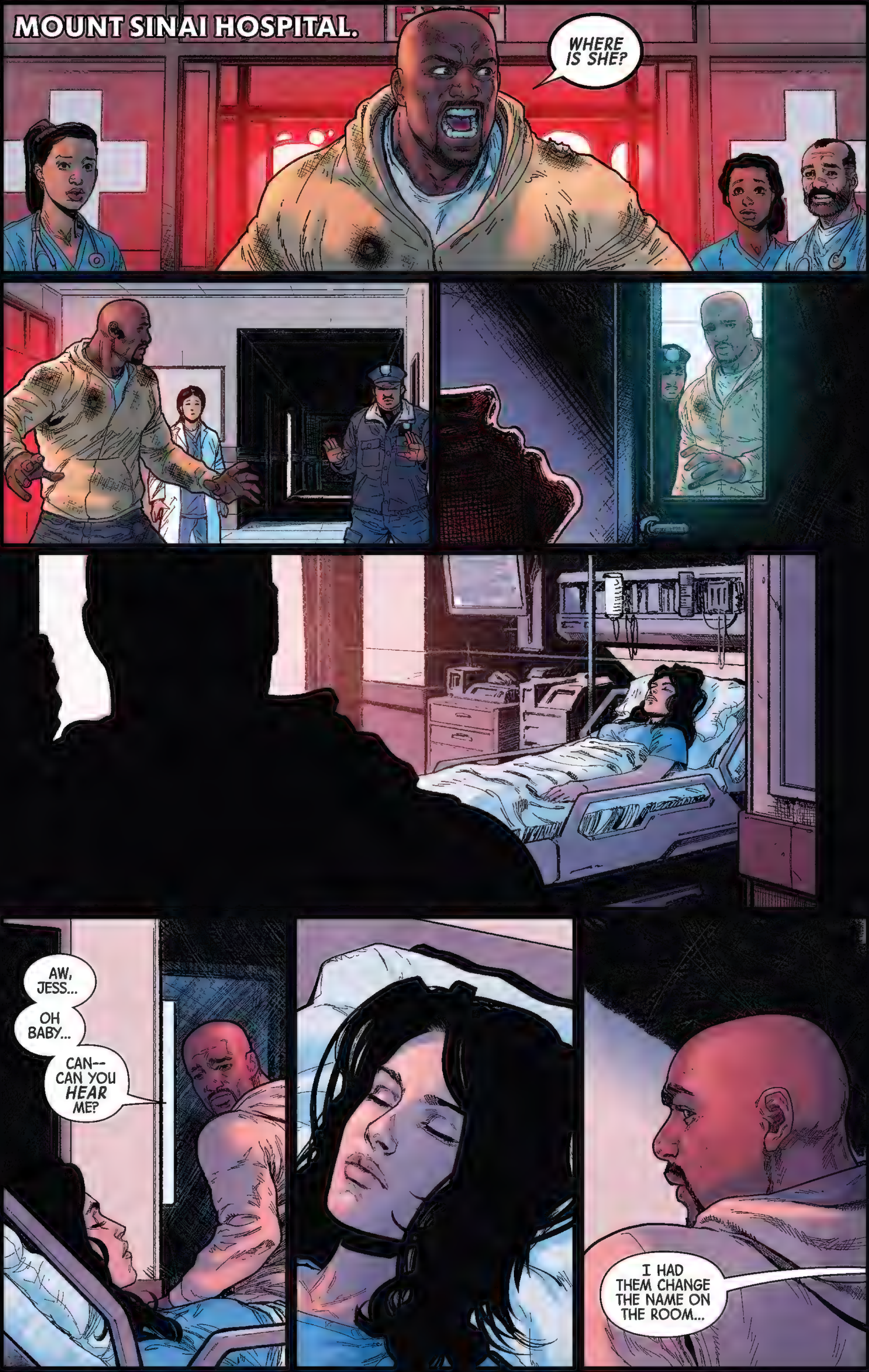
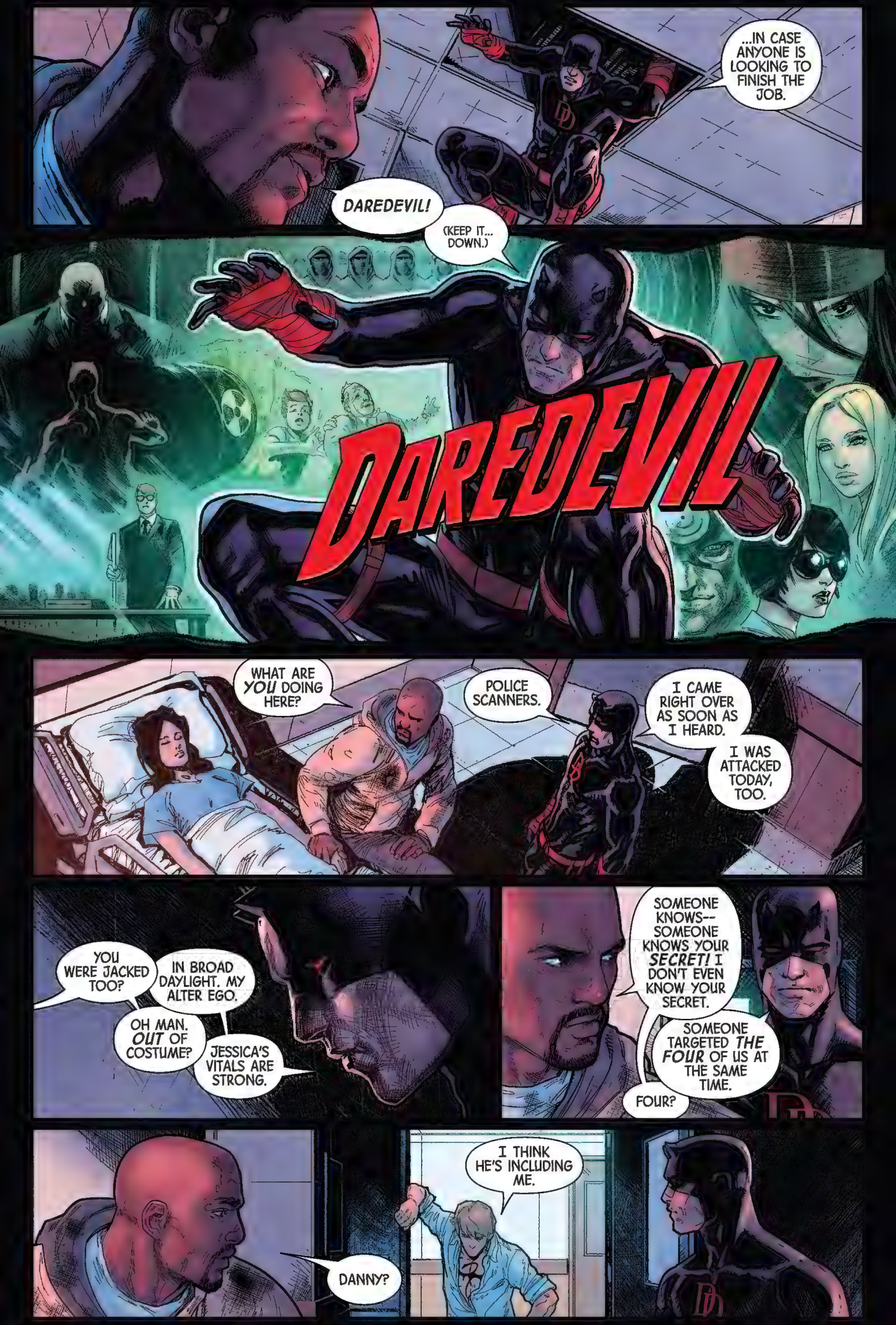
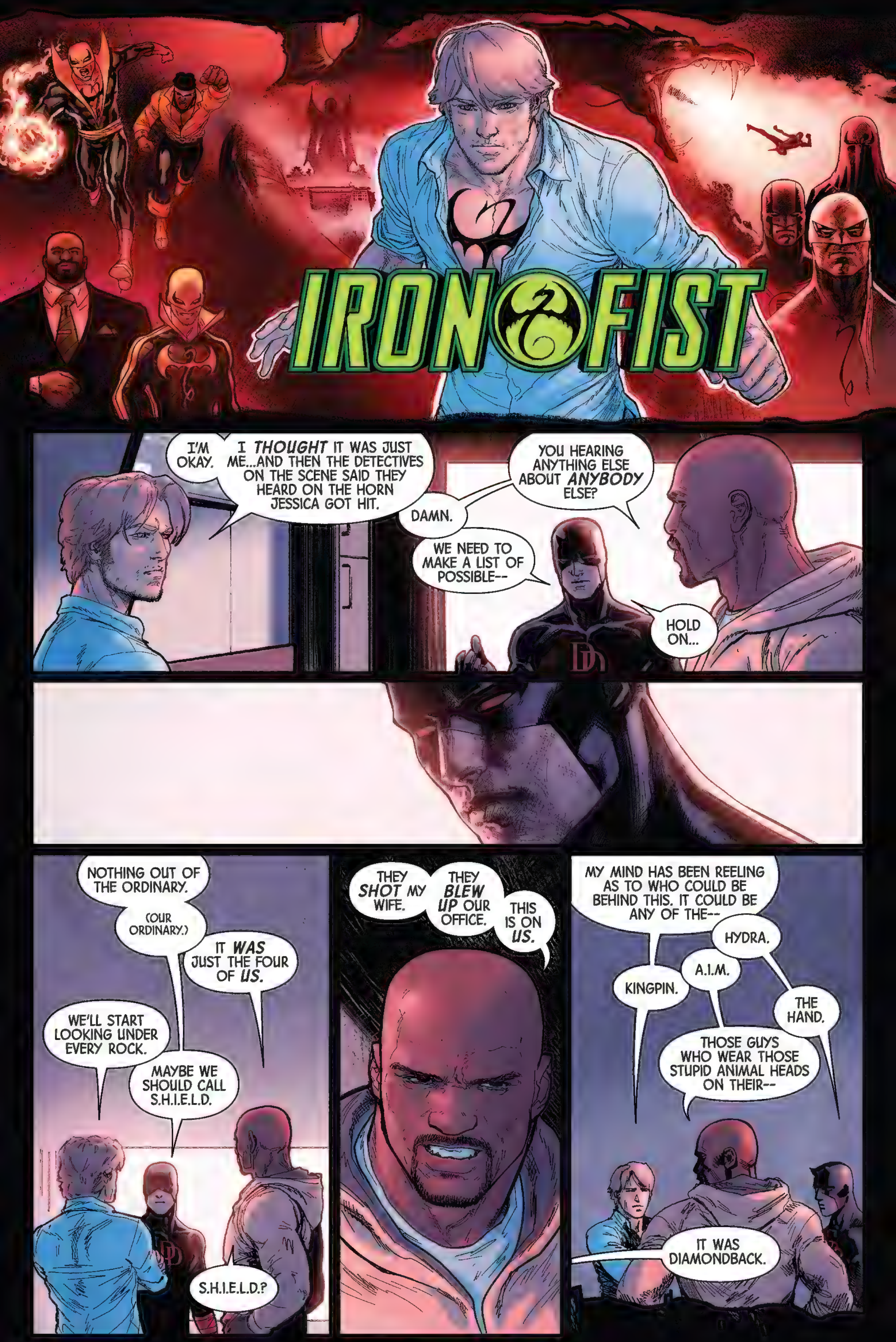
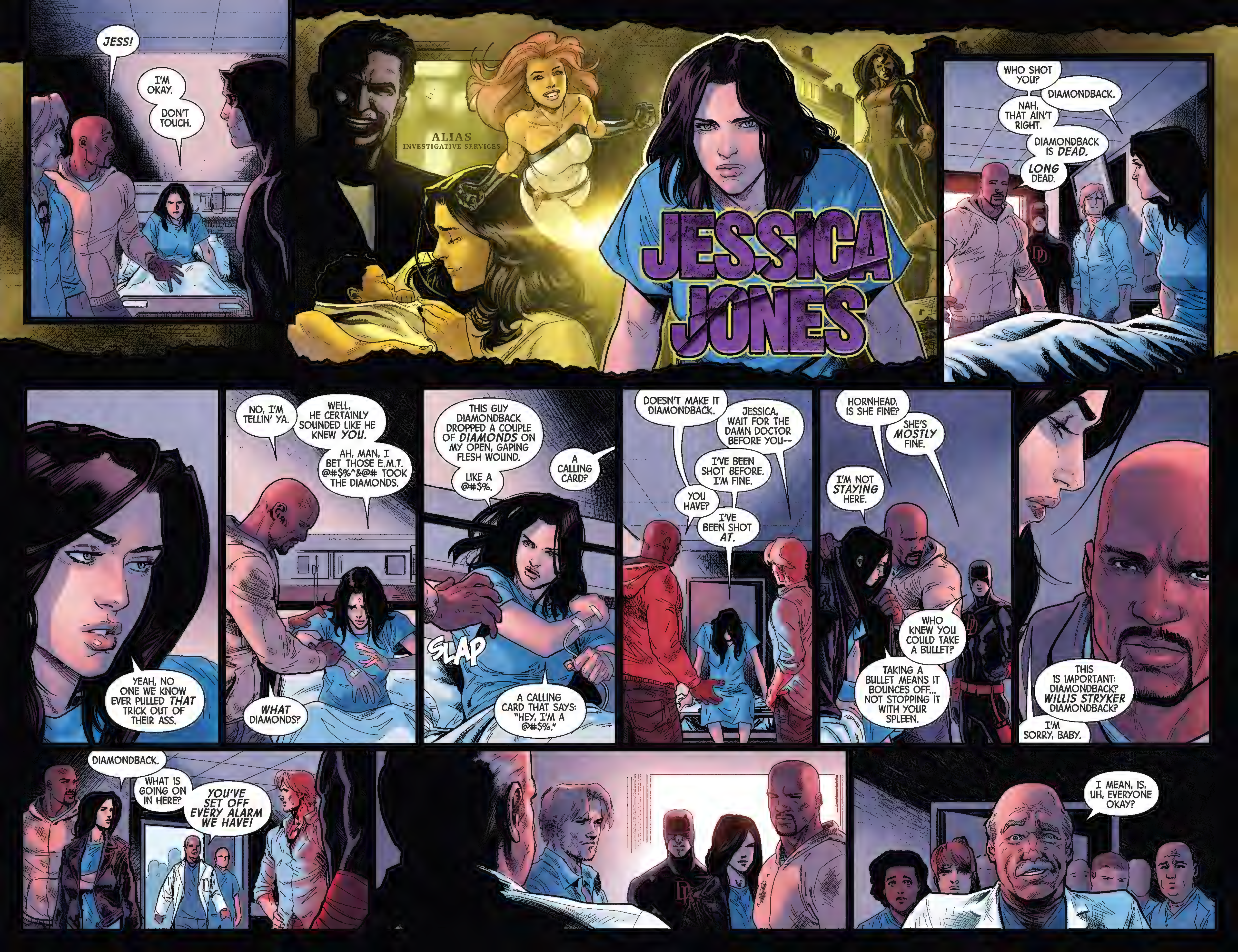
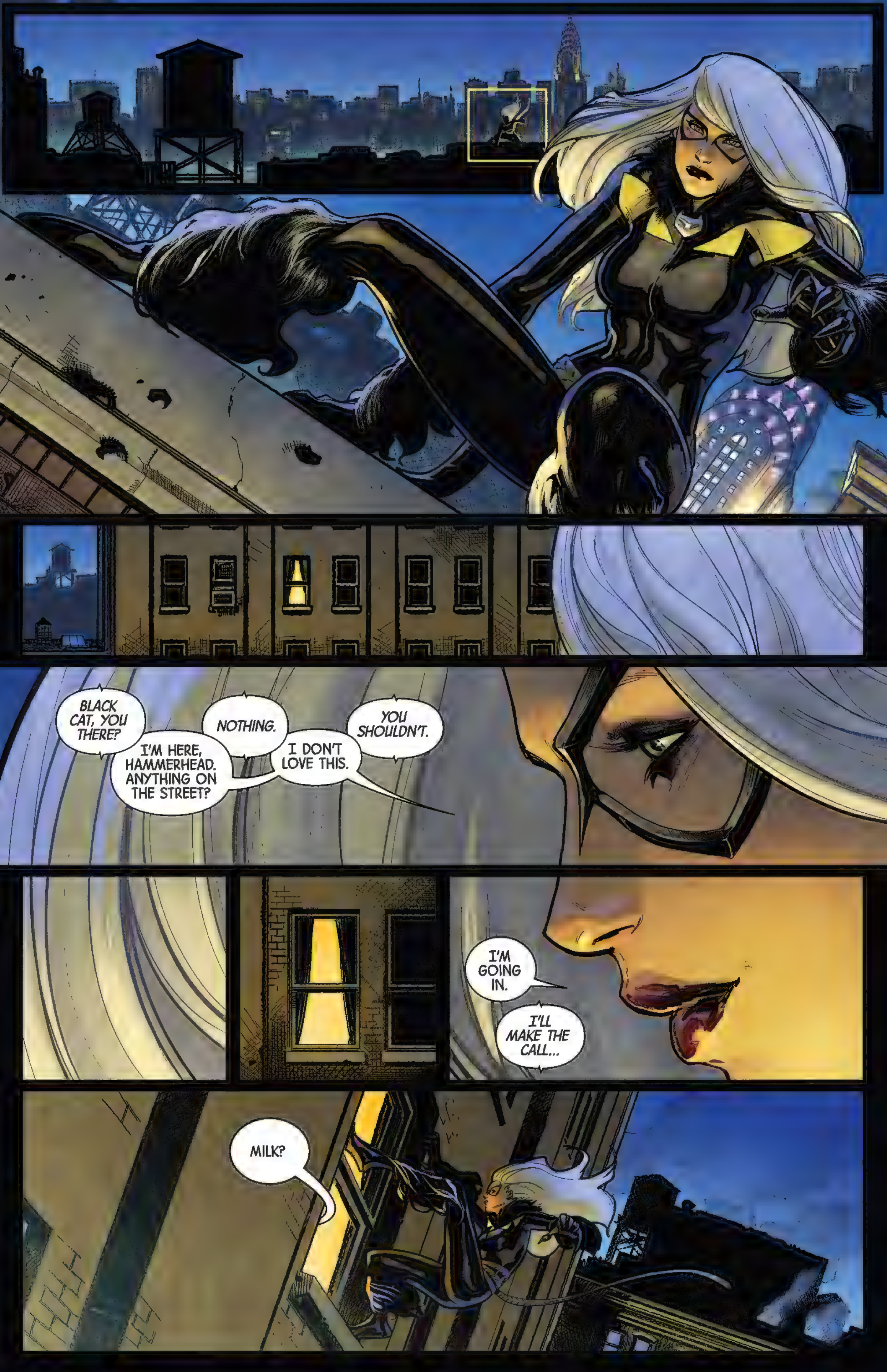
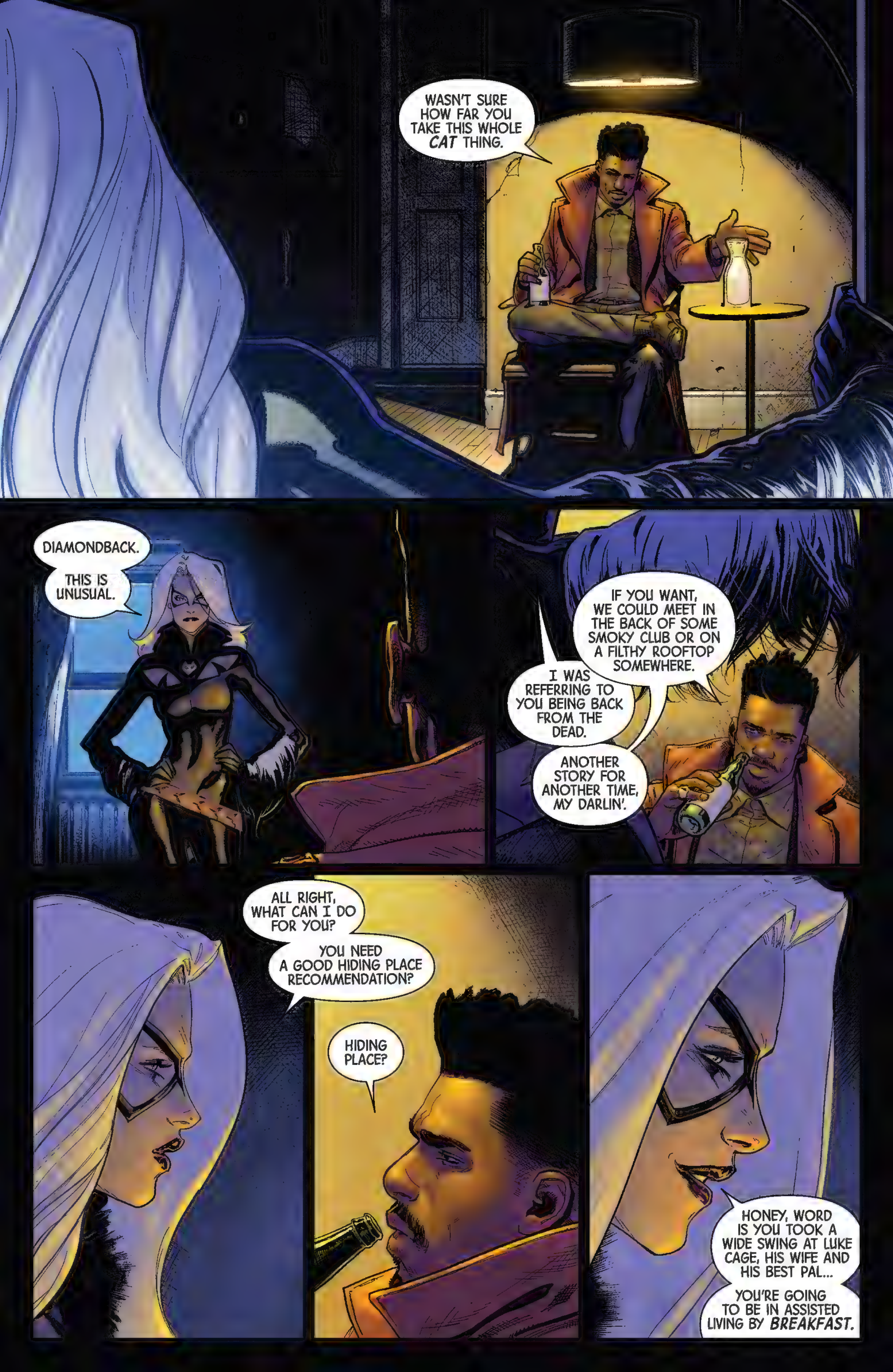

MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL.
WHERE IS SHE?
AW, JESS...
OH BABY...
CAN-- CAN YOU *HEAR* ME?
I HAD THEM CHANGE THE NAME ON THE ROOM...

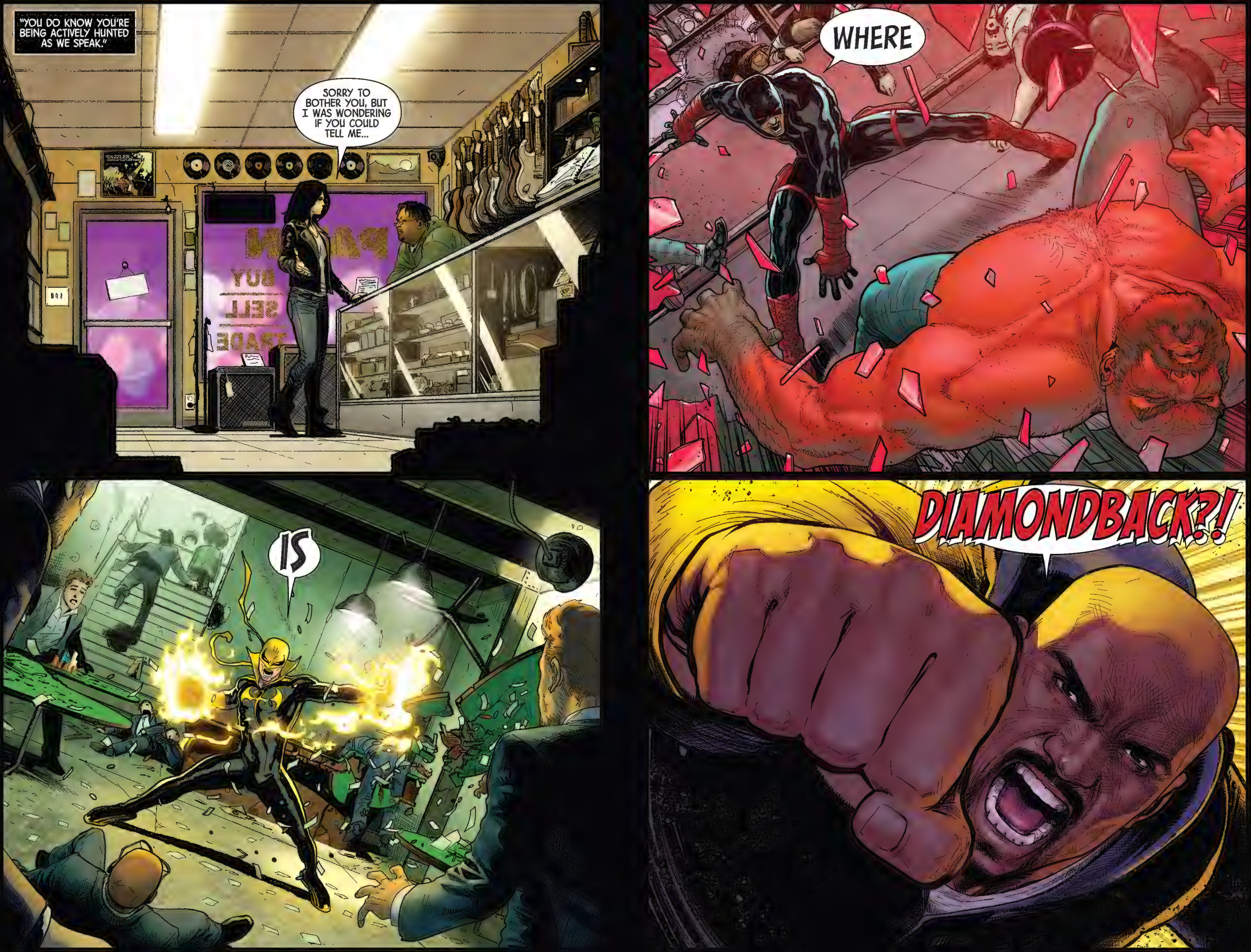

...IN CASE ANYONE IS LOOKING TO FINISH THE JOB.
DAREDEVIL!
(KEEP IT... DOWN.)
DAREDEVIL
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE?
POLICE SCANNERS.
I CAME RIGHT OVER AS SOON AS I HEARD.
I WAS ATTACKED TODAY, TOO.
YOU WERE JACKED TOO?
IN BROAD DAYLIGHT. MY ALTER EGO.
OH MAN. *OUT* OF COSTUME?
JESSICA'S VITALS ARE STRONG.
SOMEONE KNOWS-- SOMEONE KNOWS YOUR *SECRET!* I DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR SECRET.
SOMEONE TARGETED *THE FOUR* OF US AT THE SAME TIME.
FOUR?
DANNY?
I THINK HE'S INCLUDING ME.

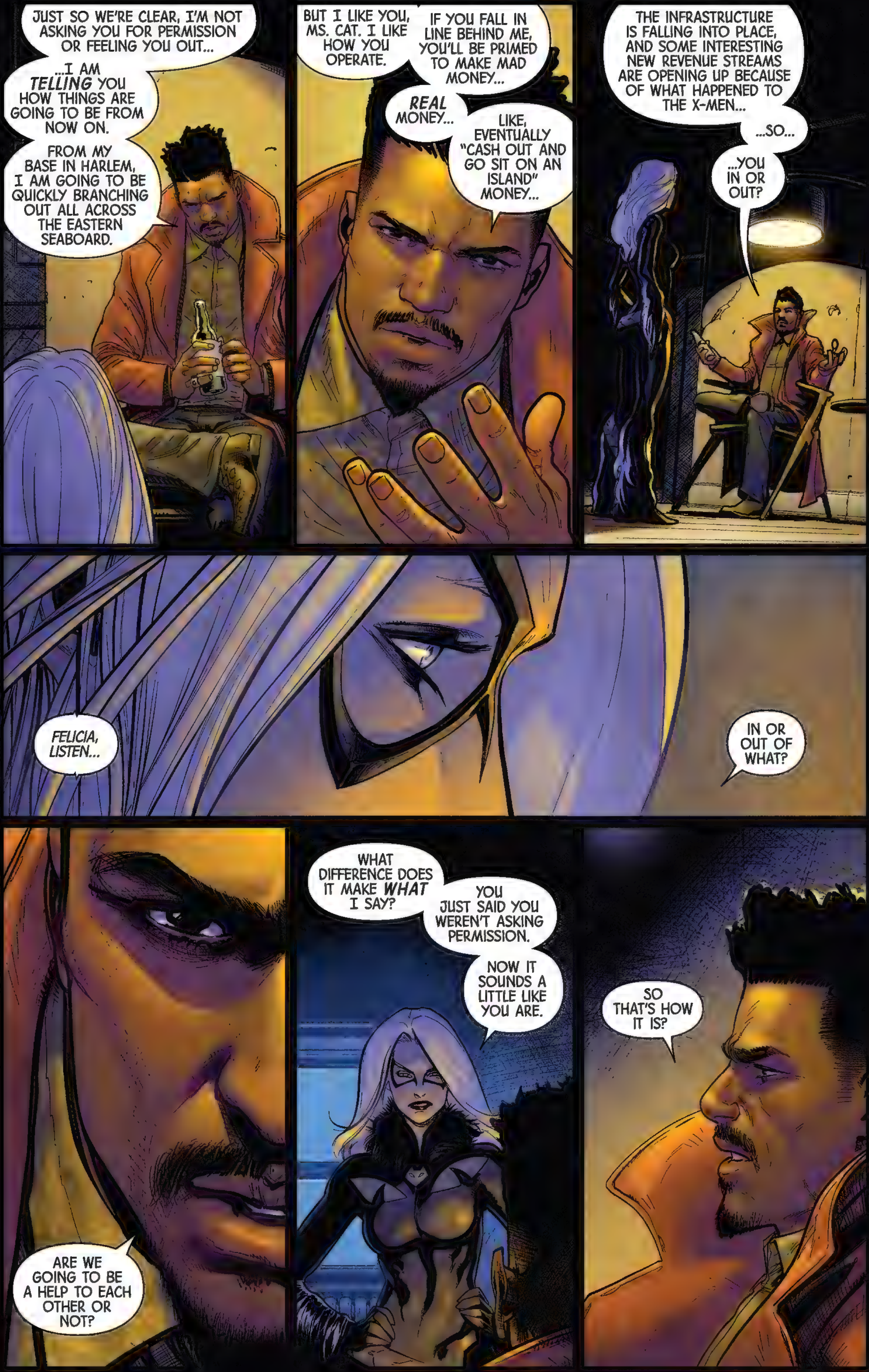

IRON FIST
I'M OKAY.
I *THOUGHT* IT WAS JUST ME...AND THEN THE DETECTIVES ON THE SCENE SAID THEY HEARD ON THE HORN JESSICA GOT HIT.
DAMN.
YOU HEARING ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT *ANYBODY* ELSE?
WE NEED TO MAKE A LIST OF POSSIBLE--
HOLD ON...
NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.
(OUR ORDINARY.)
IT *WAS* JUST THE FOUR OF *US*.
WE'LL START LOOKING UNDER EVERY ROCK.
MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL S.H.I.E.L.D.
S.H.I.E.L.D.?
THEY *SHOT* MY WIFE.
THEY *BLEW UP* OUR OFFICE.
THIS IS ON *US*.
MY MIND HAS BEEN REELING AS TO WHO COULD BE BEHIND THIS. IT COULD BE ANY OF THE--
HYDRA.
A.I.M.
KINGPIN.
THE HAND.
THOSE GUYS WHO WEAR THOSE STUPID ANIMAL HEADS ON THEIR--
IT WAS DIAMONDBACK.

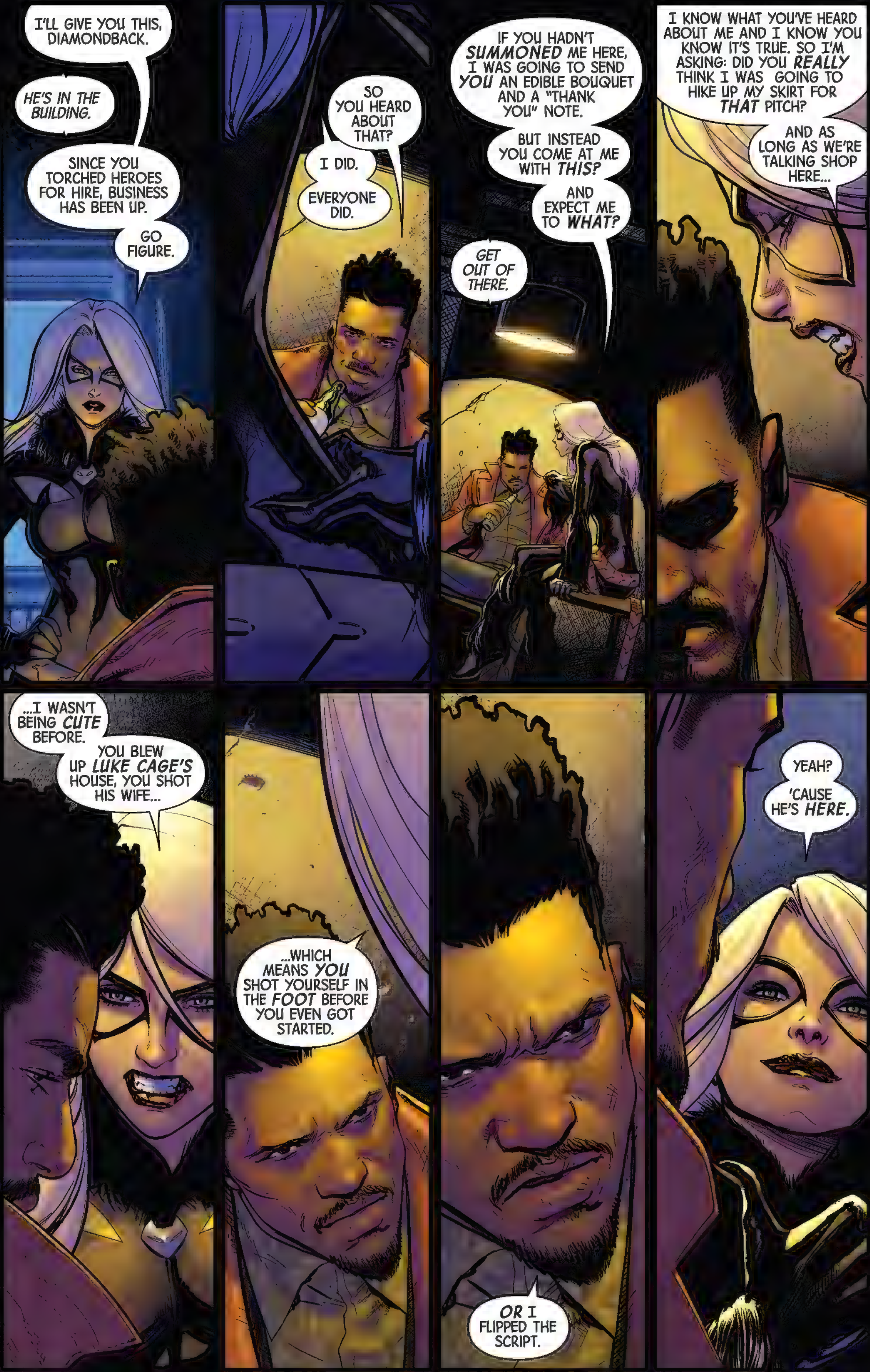

JESS!
I'M OKAY.
DON'T TOUCH.
ALIAS INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES
JESSICA JONES
WHO SHOT YOU?
DIAMONDBACK.
NAH, THAT AIN'T RIGHT.
DIAMONDBACK IS DEAD.
LONG DEAD.
YEAH, NO ONE WE KNOW EVER PULLED THAT TRICK OUT OF THEIR ASS.
NO, I'M TELLIN' YA.
WELL, HE CERTAINLY SOUNDED LIKE HE KNEW YOU.
AH, MAN, I BET THOSE E.M.T. @#$%^&@# TOOK THE DIAMONDS.
WHAT DIAMONDS?
THIS GUY DIAMONDBACK DROPPED A COUPLE OF DIAMONDS ON MY OPEN, GAPING FLESH WOUND.
LIKE A @#$%.
A CALLING CARD?
SLAP
A CALLING CARD THAT SAYS: "HEY, I'M A @#$%."
DOESN'T MAKE IT DIAMONDBACK.
JESSICA, WAIT FOR THE DAMN DOCTOR BEFORE YOU--
I'VE BEEN SHOT BEFORE. I'M FINE.
YOU HAVE?
I'VE BEEN SHOT AT.
HORNHEAD, IS SHE FINE?
SHE'S MOSTLY FINE.
I'M NOT STAYING HERE.
WHO KNEW YOU COULD TAKE A BULLET?
TAKING A BULLET MEANS IT BOUNCES OFF... NOT STOPPING IT WITH YOUR SPLEEN.
THIS IS IMPORTANT: DIAMONDBACK? WILLIS STRYKER DIAMONDBACK?
I'M SORRY, BABY.
DIAMONDBACK.
WHAT IS GOING ON IN HERE?
YOU'VE SET OFF EVERY ALARM WE HAVE!
I MEAN, IS, UH, EVERYONE OKAY?

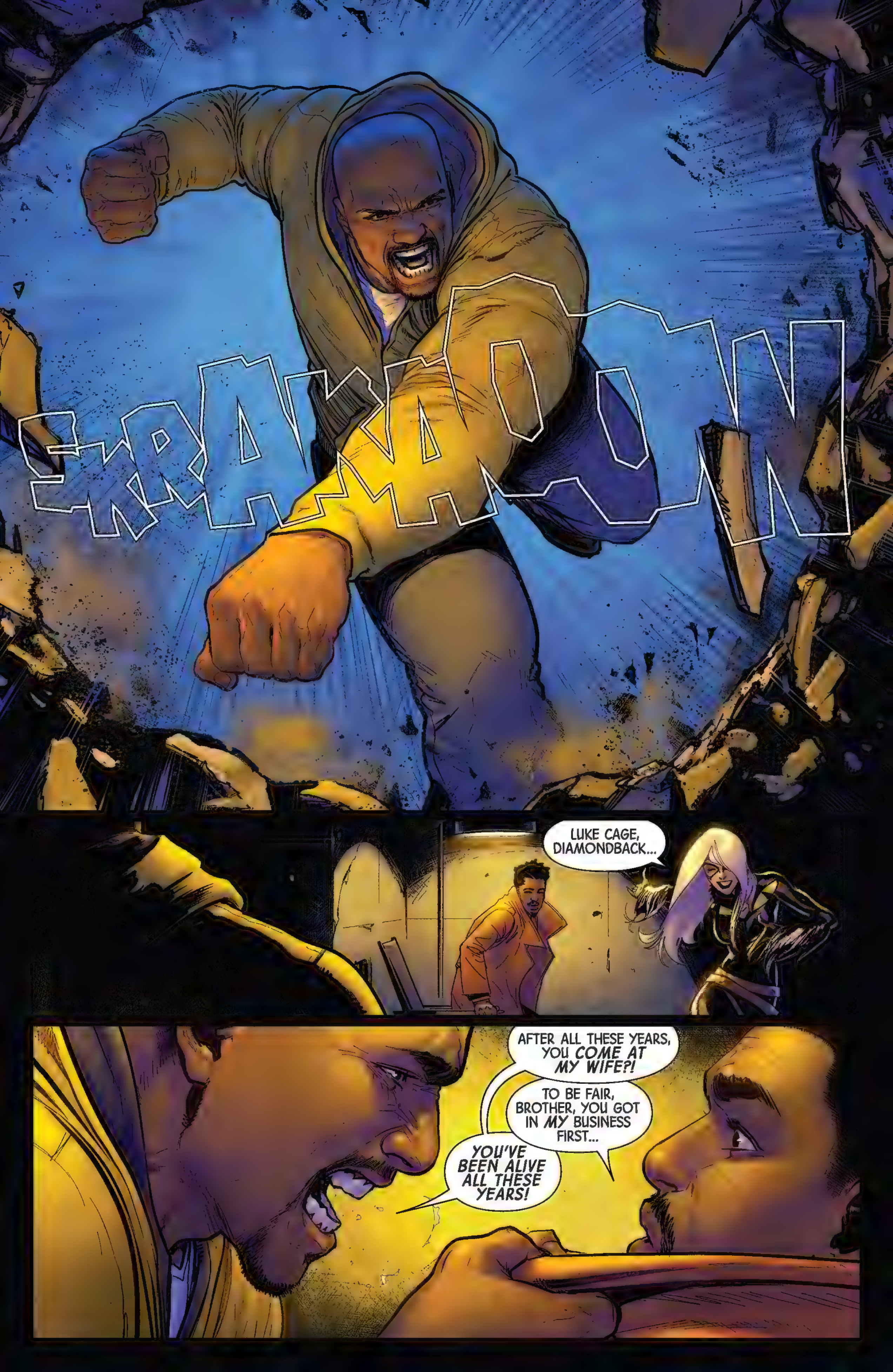

BLACK CAT, YOU THERE?
I'M HERE, HAMMERHEAD. ANYTHING ON THE STREET?
NOTHING.
I DON'T LOVE THIS.
YOU SHOULDN'T.
I'M GOING IN.
I'LL MAKE THE CALL...
MILK?

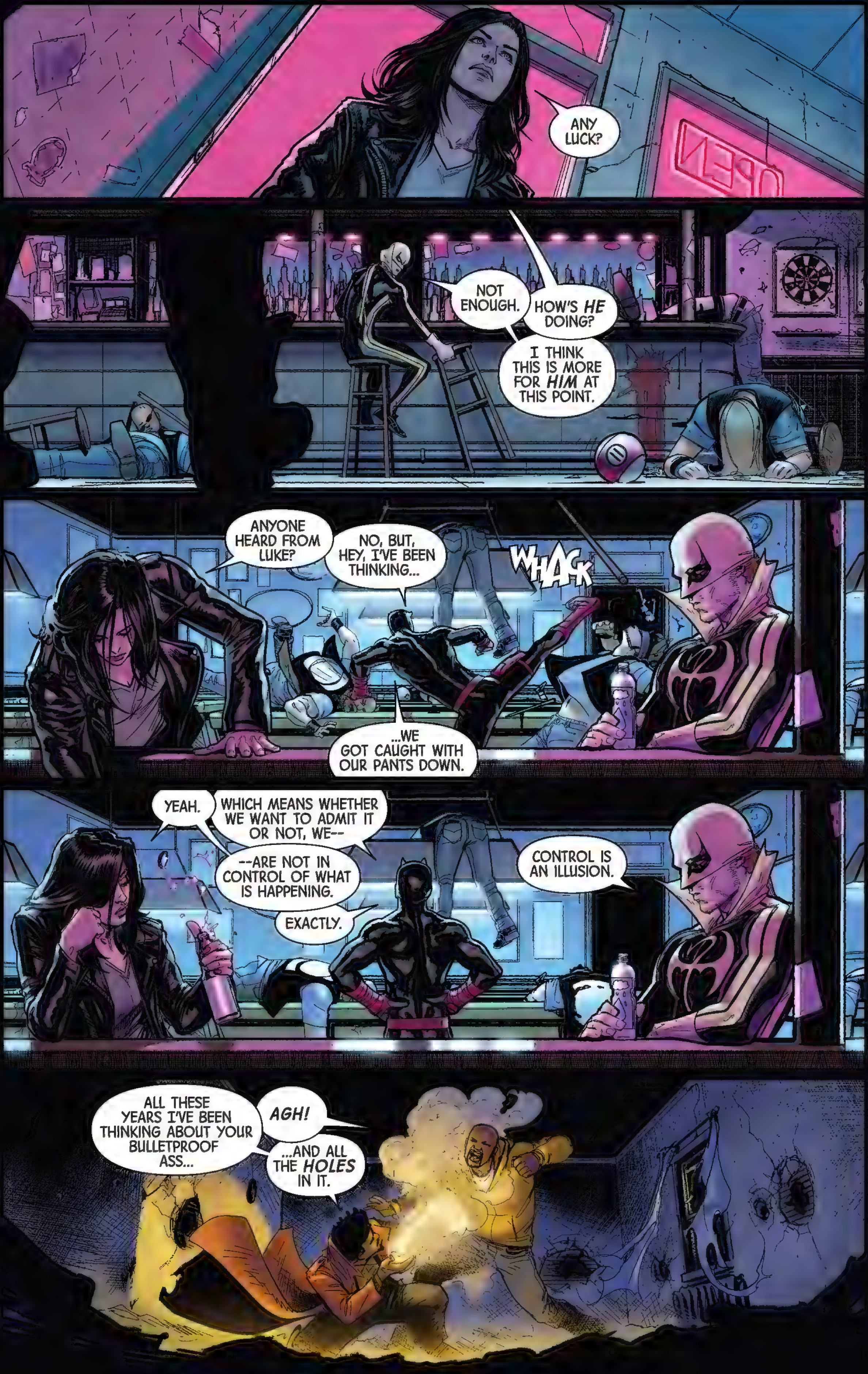

WASN'T SURE HOW FAR YOU TAKE THIS WHOLE *CAT* THING.
DIAMONDBACK.
THIS IS UNUSUAL.
I WAS REFERRING TO YOU BEING BACK FROM THE DEAD.
IF YOU WANT, WE COULD MEET IN THE BACK OF SOME SMOKY CLUB OR ON A FILTHY ROOFTOP SOMEWHERE.
ANOTHER STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME, MY DARLIN'.
ALL RIGHT, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
YOU NEED A GOOD HIDING PLACE RECOMMENDATION?
HIDING PLACE?
HONEY, WORD IS YOU TOOK A WIDE SWING AT LUKE CAGE, HIS WIFE AND HIS BEST PAL...
YOU'RE GOING TO BE IN ASSISTED LIVING BY *BREAKFAST*.

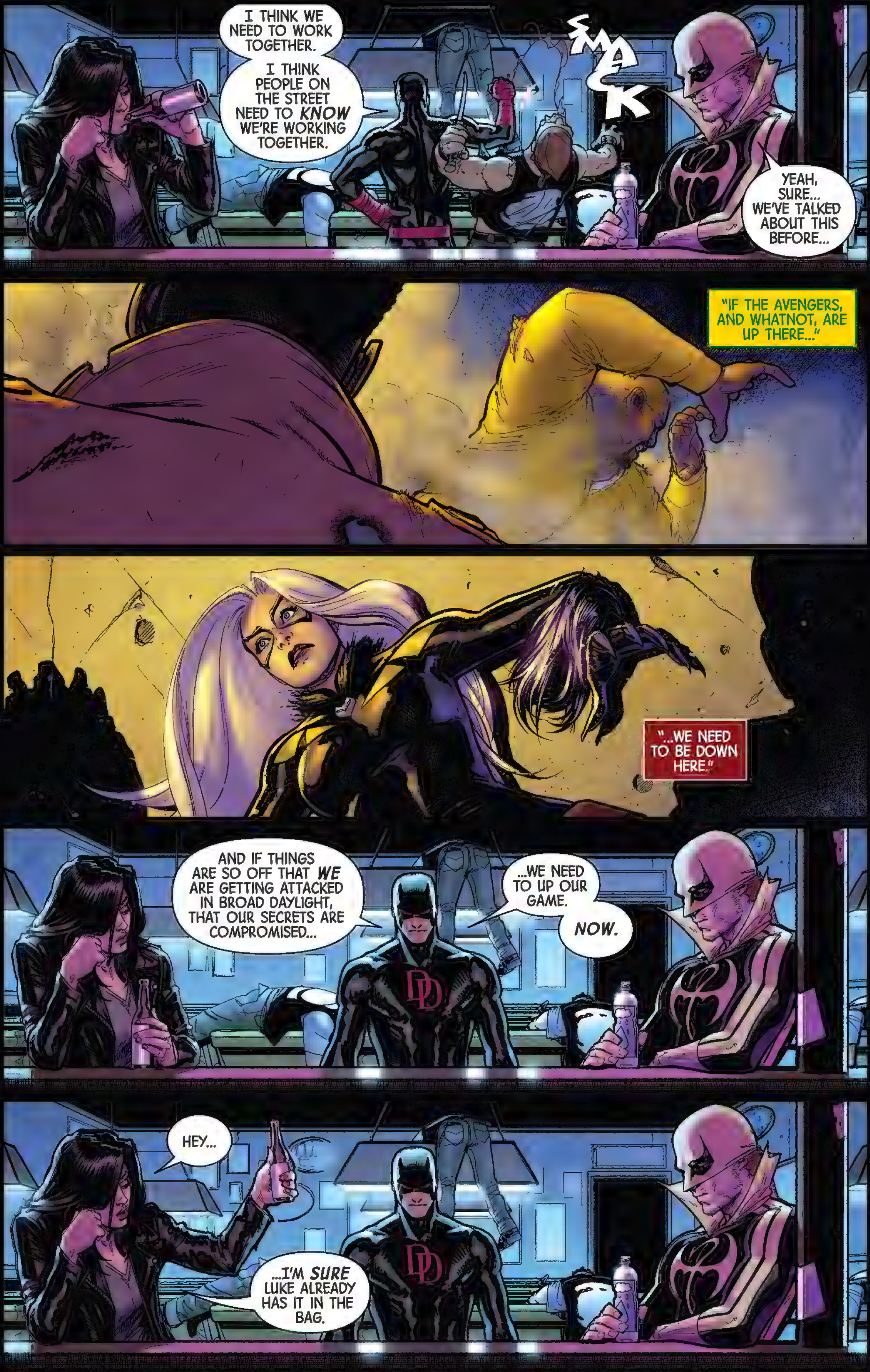

"YOU DO KNOW YOU'RE BEING ACTIVELY HUNTED AS WE SPEAK."
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BUT I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD TELL ME...
DAZZLER
WHERE
IS
DIAMONDBACK?!

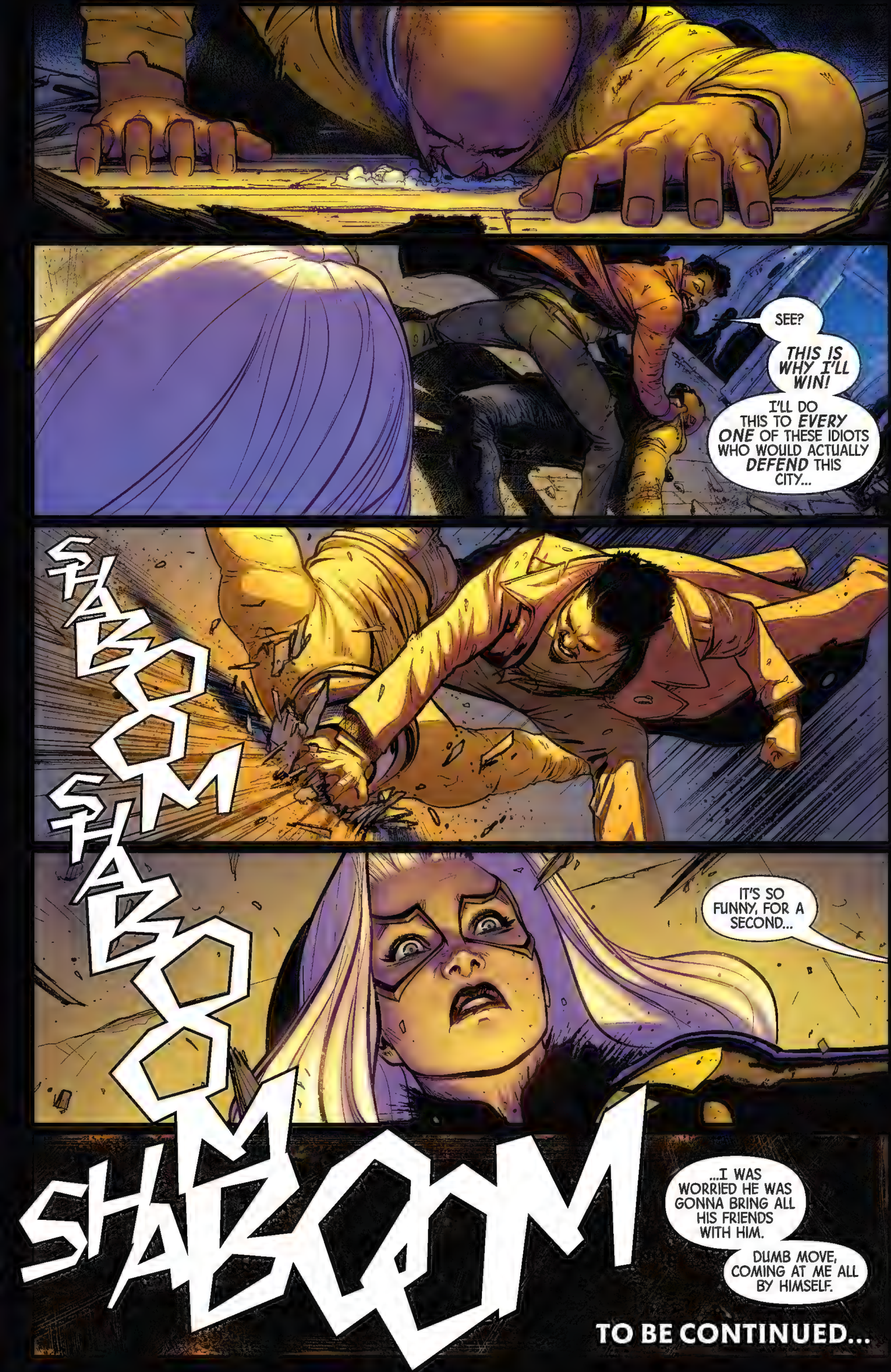

JUST SO WE'RE CLEAR, I'M NOT ASKING YOU FOR PERMISSION OR FEELING YOU OUT...
...I AM *TELLING* YOU HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO BE FROM NOW ON.
FROM MY BASE IN HARLEM, I AM GOING TO BE QUICKLY BRANCHING OUT ALL ACROSS THE EASTERN SEABOARD.
BUT I LIKE YOU, MS. CAT. I LIKE HOW YOU OPERATE.
IF YOU FALL IN LINE BEHIND ME, YOU'LL BE PRIMED TO MAKE MAD MONEY...
REAL MONEY...
LIKE, EVENTUALLY "CASH OUT AND GO SIT ON AN ISLAND" MONEY...
THE INFRASTRUCTURE IS FALLING INTO PLACE, AND SOME INTERESTING NEW REVENUE STREAMS ARE OPENING UP BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THE X-MEN...
...SO...
...YOU IN OR OUT?
FELICIA, LISTEN...
IN OR OUT OF WHAT?
ARE WE GOING TO BE A HELP TO EACH OTHER OR NOT?
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE *WHAT* I SAY?
YOU JUST SAID YOU WEREN'T ASKING PERMISSION.
NOW IT SOUNDS A LITTLE LIKE YOU ARE.
SO THAT'S HOW IT IS?


I'LL GIVE YOU THIS, DIAMONDBACK.
HE'S IN THE BUILDING.
SINCE YOU TORCHED HEROES FOR HIRE, BUSINESS HAS BEEN UP.
GO FIGURE.
SO YOU HEARD ABOUT THAT?
I DID.
EVERYONE DID.
IF YOU HADN'T SUMMONED ME HERE, I WAS GOING TO SEND YOU AN EDIBLE BOUQUET AND A "THANK YOU" NOTE.
BUT INSTEAD YOU COME AT ME WITH THIS?
AND EXPECT ME TO WHAT?
GET OUT OF THERE.
I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT ME AND I KNOW YOU KNOW IT'S TRUE. SO I'M ASKING: DID YOU REALLY THINK I WAS GOING TO HIKE UP MY SKIRT FOR THAT PITCH?
AND AS LONG AS WE'RE TALKING SHOP HERE...
...I WASN'T BEING CUTE BEFORE.
YOU BLEW UP LUKE CAGE'S HOUSE, YOU SHOT HIS WIFE...
...WHICH MEANS YOU SHOT YOURSELF IN THE FOOT BEFORE YOU EVEN GOT STARTED.
OR I FLIPPED THE SCRIPT.
YEAH?
'CAUSE HE'S HERE.


SKRAKAOOW
LUKE CAGE, DIAMONDBACK...
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, YOU *COME AT MY WIFE?!*
TO BE FAIR, BROTHER, YOU GOT IN *MY* BUSINESS FIRST...
YOU'VE BEEN ALIVE ALL THESE YEARS!


ANY LUCK?
NOT ENOUGH.
HOW'S *HE* DOING?
I THINK THIS IS MORE FOR *HIM* AT THIS POINT.
ANYONE HEARD FROM LUKE?
NO, BUT, HEY, I'VE BEEN THINKING...
WHACK
...WE GOT CAUGHT WITH OUR PANTS DOWN.
YEAH.
WHICH MEANS WHETHER WE WANT TO ADMIT IT OR NOT, WE--
--ARE NOT IN CONTROL OF WHAT IS HAPPENING.
EXACTLY.
CONTROL IS AN ILLUSION.
ALL THESE YEARS I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT YOUR BULLETPROOF ASS...
AGH!
...AND ALL THE *HOLES* IN IT.


I THINK WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER.
I THINK PEOPLE ON THE STREET NEED TO *KNOW* WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER.
SMACK
YEAH, SURE... WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE...
"IF THE AVENGERS, AND WHATNOT, ARE UP THERE..."
"...WE NEED TO BE DOWN HERE."
AND IF THINGS ARE SO OFF THAT *WE* ARE GETTING ATTACKED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, THAT OUR SECRETS ARE COMPROMISED...
...WE NEED TO UP OUR GAME.
NOW.
HEY...
...I'M *SURE* LUKE ALREADY HAS IT IN THE BAG.

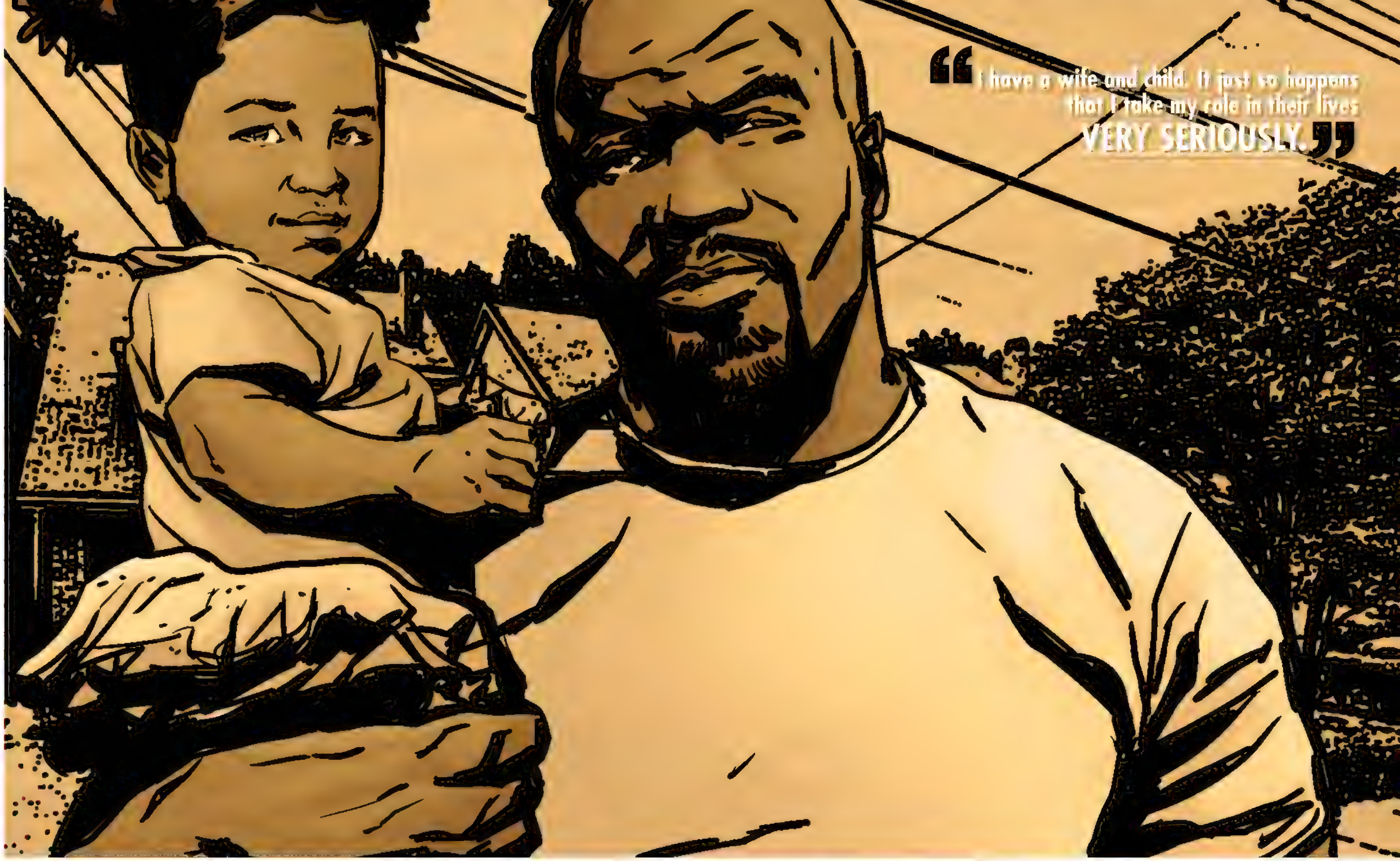

SEE?
THIS IS WHY I'LL WIN!
I'LL DO THIS TO EVERY ONE OF THESE IDIOTS WHO WOULD ACTUALLY DEFEND THIS CITY...
SHABOOM
SHABOOM
IT'S SO FUNNY, FOR A SECOND...
SHABOOM
...I WAS WORRIED HE WAS GONNA BRING ALL HIS FRIENDS WITH HIM.
DUMB MOVE, COMING AT ME ALL BY HIMSELF.
TO BE CONTINUED...

LUKE CAGE

THE PULSE interview

By Benjamin Urich

Designed By Manny Mederos



> I have a wife and child. It just so happens that I take my role in their lives VERY SERIOUSLY.

Art by: Michael Gaydos & Matt Hollingsworth

Luke Cage.

Of the seemingly endless list of people who have taken on the role of protector of this city, this country, this planet and beyond...Luke Cage, for all of his in-your-face bravado, is actually one of the least controversial and most beloved members of the super-powered community.

According to a recent *Daily Bugle*/Gallup poll, Luke Cage is actually the People's Choice to run for mayor of the City of New York–a role Cage is quick to reject. "Not my world" is all he had to say on the subject.

Maybe it's because Luke Cage's story is, oddly, an American story of survival. Carl Lucas grew up on the mean streets of Harlem, only to find himself in prison for a crime it has since been proven he did not commit. In prison, as part of an illegal experiment, Carl Lucas, against his will, underwent a procedure that gave him what the government labels "omega-event-level super-strength" and his signature unbreakable skin. He left prison a changed man in every conceivable way, and has since dedicated each day of his life to doing everything he can for anyone who needs him. Some people even pay for the privilege. Luke Cage has been an Avenger, a Defender and, of course, a founding member of Heroes for Hire. A man has to eat.

After a handful of recent salacious tabloid headlines, some perpetrated by this very organization, I sat down with Cage to talk about his career and what's next for those of us who live down in the mean streets of the five boroughs.

BEN URICH
Luke Cage. According to my research, this is the first sit-down interview you have given in many years...

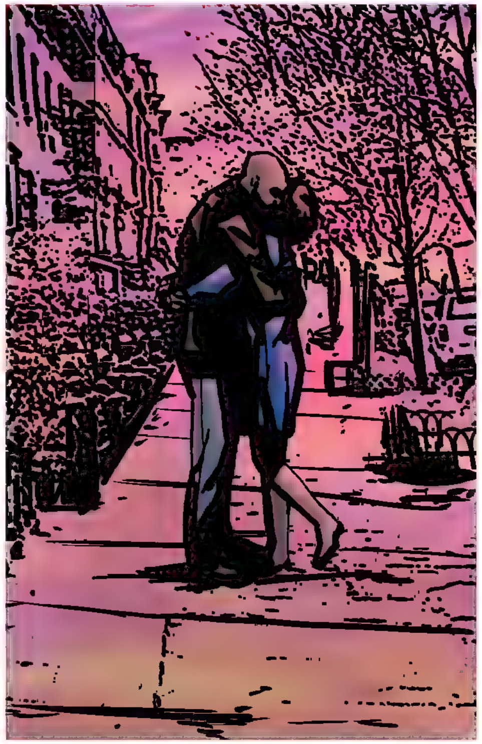
LUKE CAGE
Yes. I'm not--a lot of people run to the press to ensure they're being heard. I get that. I guess it was the way I was raised--words can be cheap. All that matters is action. You see a lot of politicians saying one thing and doing another, and still, in this day and age where these lies are so obvious, people still fall for them. I can't stand it. I thought the best way was to not participate in the nonsense, allow my actions to speak for themselves. It works most of the time.

BEN URICH
What convinced you to sit down with me today?

LUKE CAGE
Well, a couple of things. Number one is... There have been some headlines about me and my wife, and they were painting a picture that was the direct opposite of the truth. A good friend of mine pointed out that no matter what I think my silence means, it is interpreted by most as non-denial... If I'm not denying it, it must be true. No one knows that I'm choosing to ignore it because it's stupid. So I thought I would come here and tell people that it's stupid.

BEN URICH
So I take it you're here to say you're not having an affair...

LUKE CAGE
Perfect example. I'm out on the street, speaking to a longtime colleague of mine, like a war buddy... we hug goodbye, someone takes a picture of the hug from a distance...and it looks like I'm macking on some lady in broad daylight. What bothers me about this is, of course, it's not true. I have a wife and child. It just so happens that I take my role in their lives very seriously. I take my role as an African-American man in the public eye very seriously. Someone else used me to make money...with a lie. I guess I can put up with people using us to make money if it's the truth, but this is the opposite. I don't like being painted as something that I find abhorrent. And the flip side is, I know by denying it, I might sound guilty too. I know this. But I have to tell the truth.


Art by: Michael Gaydos & Matt Hollingsworth

BEN URICH
You and Jessica Jones are still together...

LUKE CAGE
Yes.

BEN URICH
You have a lovely daughter.

LUKE CAGE
Yes. Thank you.

BEN URICH
How is fatherhood?

LUKE CAGE
Fatherhood. True story, I once got into a good old-fashioned street fight with Dr. Doom...

BEN URICH
And fatherhood is scarier?

LUKE CAGE
You beat me to the punchline! (laughs)

BEN URICH
How is raising a family, doing what you do?

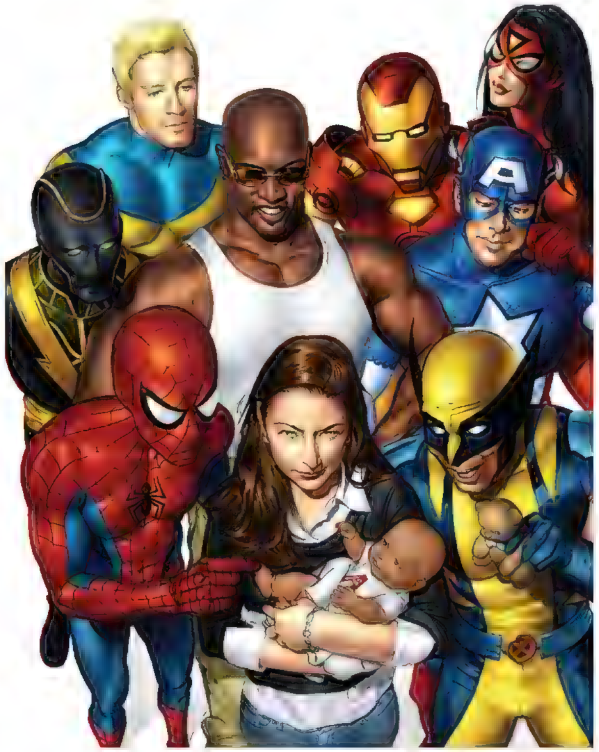
LUKE CAGE
Ask me in ten years. Is it any different than a cop or a fireman, a federal agent or S.H.I.E.L.D. agent with a family? It's a scary job. But I come home every day, so far, and if I've done it right, I've left the world better than I found it. So does my wife. So does my best friend. My feeling is, if we do that every day, then the world my daughter is going to grow up in will be far better than the one my wife and I grew up in, which, in fact, sucked. I'm not alone in this, but I live by the idea that if everyone woke up one morning and decided to actively be the best version of themselves, or just do their job exceptionally well, the entire world would shift immediately into something–well, frankly, something we all deserve. Right?

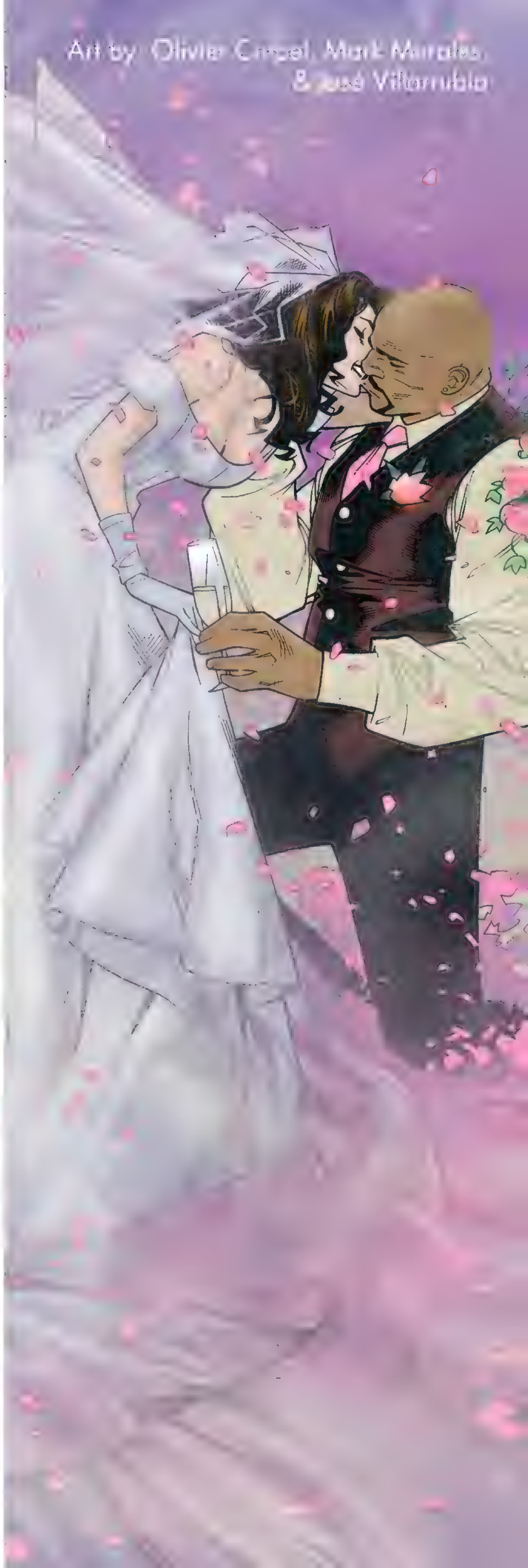
BEN URICH
Fair enough. It's just a very unique thing for your community.

LUKE CAGE
What's that now?

BEN URICH
Other than the Fantastic Four, you don't see many public displays of family in the super hero--

LUKE CAGE
Well, that's not true. The Avengers are a family. The Defenders are a family. The X-Men? Most of the super hero community tends to gravitate toward each other, because we came from broken homes or disappointing homes or just bad homes. While we're pulling ourselves up out of the sludge, we meet other people like us and we end up really bonding with each other and helping each other, lifting each other up–then all of a sudden, you turn around and you have a family. I built my family. Danny Rand is my family. He is my brother. Daredevil is family. Literally, I'd do anything for these people. Anything. It's one of the great surprises of doing this–that you get to meet the other people who inspire you and you get to see how amazing they are in real life. These people understand me on levels that other people might not, because we share a common experience. It's cool to have super-powers, it is. I'm not ever going to be one of those people that complains about my power and the responsibility it brings. But, like everything, it comes with its own problems, and you still want to complain about work to your peers. Especially if that work includes getting punched in the side of the head by a cosmically enhanced Doctor Doom. You're going to want to have a friendly, trustworthy ear. It's nice to have that. I know I sound like one of those billionaires whining about


Art by: Mike Mayhew


Art by: Olivier Coipel, Mark Morales, & José Villarrubia

BE A
TRUE
POWER
MAN

Art by: Jason Latour

tax reform, but when you have super-powers, there are still concerns.

BEN URICH
The safety of those around you--

LUKE CAGE
Number one concern.

BEN URICH
There's been a lot of talk recently about vigilantism and the role of the costumed hero--

LUKE CAGE
There always is.

BEN URICH
So if you have something to lose--if you have family--why do it?

LUKE CAGE
We need cops and we need firemen and we need agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. And you know what? We need more of all of them. But we CLEARLY need more than that. There are really dangerous people out there eager to take advantage of everything and anyone because, dammit, they have it coming. I have seen this since I was a baby. I know this. There are people who will do and say anything to get "what's theirs" and they don't follow any kind of code. They run by rules the police cannot work with.

BEN URICH
Sometimes very brazenly.

LUKE CAGE
Right?

BEN URICH
Recently, a character that calls himself Diamondback has been making some bold moves. A blast from your past.

LUKE CAGE
You mind if we don't talk about that?

BEN URICH
Okay.

LUKE CAGE
It's just, I'm inclined not to give that guy press. You know?

BEN URICH
I do. I was more interested in the history between you two.

LUKE CAGE
It's just that.

BEN URICH
What?

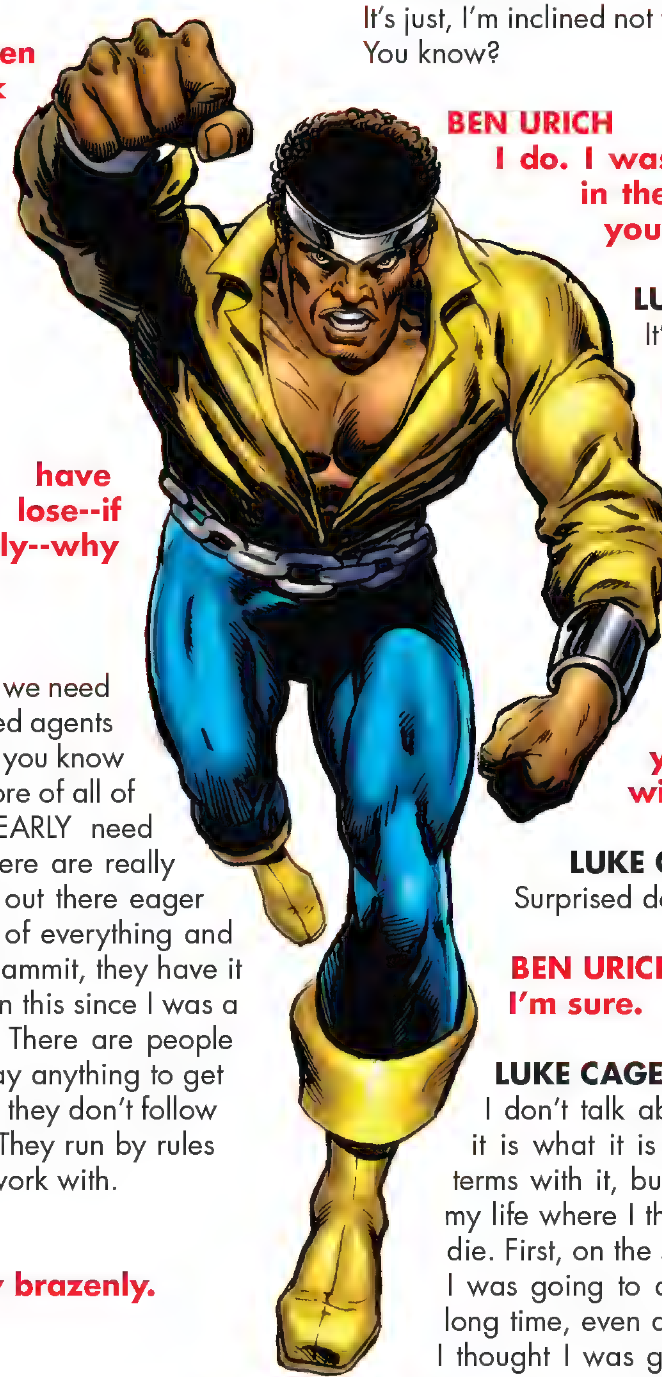
LUKE CAGE
It's history.

BEN URICH
Okay, today then. Are you surprised to find yourself "married with children"?

LUKE CAGE
Surprised doesn't quite cover it.

BEN URICH
I'm sure.

LUKE CAGE
I don't talk about it much because it is what it is and I have come to terms with it, but there was a time in my life where I thought I was going to die. First, on the streets. Then I thought I was going to die in jail. And for a long time, even after I got my powers, I thought I was going to just die from having something this unnatural done to my body. So for a good long period of my life I thought I was going of die. It's probably why I appreciate how lucky I am–



Art by: Dave Cockrum, Rich Buckler, & Paul Mounts

[Luke Cage pauses for over three minutes. In this time he does nothing but actively control his breathing and look out the window. Eventually, composed, he returns to the conversation as if no time has gone by at all.]

LUKE CAGE
What was the question?

BEN URICH
How has fatherhood been treating you?

[Luke Cage laughs. He realizes the question got the best of him. An omega-level super hero done in by the oldest of concerns.]

Obviously, this story is... to be continued.

Art by: Leinil Francis Yu

We want to hear from YOU! Email us at MHEROES@MARVEL.COM and mark your emails "OKAY TO PRINT"! You can also tweet us using the hashtags #DefendersComic and #Oktoprint for a chance to see your tweet printed in future issues! And now, a few words from our all-star creative team: Brian Michael Bendis, David Marquez and Justin Ponsor!

This is a book we are very excited about. My history with these characters is, let's say, pronounced. First of all, some of you know that I'm one of the creators of Jessica Jones. Doesn't get more intimate than that.

For those who have not been reading the new JESSICA JONES series, things are very different for her and Luke. Their relationship will be the cornerstone of DEFENDERS just as it was sometimes back in NEW AVENGERS.

In fact, let's talk about NEW AVENGERS--where I staked my reputation and put Luke Cage right front and center. If there was a major Marvel event–CIVIL WAR I, SECRET INVASION, etc.–I tried to make sure Mr. Cage, for the first time in his long history, had something to say about it. Plus, I was writing ALIAS, DAREDEVIL and two AVENGERS books simultaneously, and it created a situation where I could develop the relationship between Jessica Jones and Luke Cage into something very real. And I love Daredevil so much. I have missed writing him. Returning to the character in this decidedly different scenario has been very creatively fulfilling.

When I was writing all these characters previously, I initially steered clear of Iron Fist because he was being written by two really good friends of mine--Matt Fraction and Ed Brubaker--in the seminal run with David Aja. But once he became available, we grabbed him…we even found a cool way to connect the Iron Fist saga to the Phoenix saga and introduced the white costume, which is the best costume! When I was done with AVENGERS, I was already preparing this book. I was. I pitched it publicly in on my last page, and then something happened…they all became big-ass TV stars! And all those who spent the aughts MOCKING me for a Luke Cage "crush"…were silenced! As I was proven right! Again! :-)

And now, finally, the stars align for us to make this very special new book. Our goal is to create a brand-new, very dangerous, very exciting tapestry for our street-level comics–all of which will be centered around these four amazing characters, but almost every single character you can think of that would fit in the mean streets of Marvel will feature in this book.

They will be threatened by new players, new threats, old scores and new rules. Issue three? The Punisher.

People always ask me what they can do to support their favorite comics…go to your local store and preorder. That means the store will set one aside for you and that means we will set one aside for the store. Thanks for reading!

-Brian Michael Bendis

I couldn't be more excited to be working on THE DEFENDERS, especially since it means I get to team up once again with Brian and Justin.

During my career at Marvel, I've gotten to play with so many amazing characters--Miles Morales, Tony Stark, Captain Marvel (and so many more in the recent CIVIL WAR II event)–but I've felt that I'd neglected one corner of the Marvel Universe: the shadowy streets of New York City that are home to some of my favorite heroes. Especially after the huge scope of CWII, I leapt at the opportunity to tell a more intimate (though no less exciting and action-packed) story with the likes of Daredevil, Jessica Jones, Luke Cage and Iron Fist kicking butt and taking names among the water towers and fire escapes of Hell's Kitchen.

It's also a chance to lean into a different visual storytelling style. After the bright and shiny world of futurist Tony Stark and the Hollywood blockbuster of CWII, THE DEFENDERS is a chance to explore a stark neo-noir world of vivid neon lights and gritty shadows where the city itself becomes a character. These are streets defined by artists like Sienkiewicz, Miller, Maleev and Mazzucchelli, and it's hard to not want to play in that same sandbox. But as much as I may want to evoke that visual flavor we all associate with these heroes, I'm also bringing my own sensibilities to the table–and the result, especially since I'm once again teamed up with color artist extraordinaire Justin Ponsor, is something new and exciting and unlike what we've seen done with these characters before.

And, of course, these are heroes that Brian has helped define during his runs on books like DAREDEVIL and NEW AVENGERS. I couldn't be more proud to be partnering once again with him to open up a new chapter in these characters' lives. It's gonna be a thrilling ride and I'm glad y'all are coming along with us.

-David Marquez

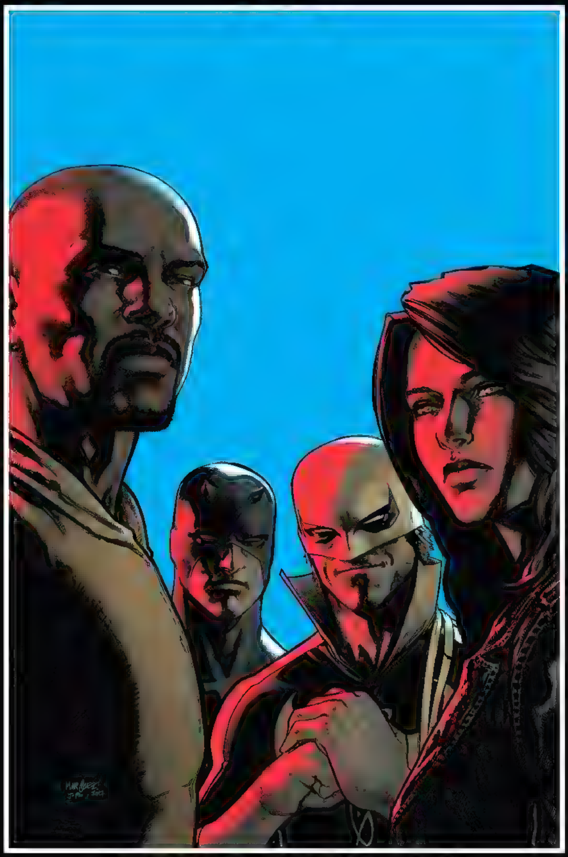
When Brian and David told me what they were cooking up for DEFENDERS and the new look they had in mind for it, I jumped at the chance...metaphorically. I mean, I could have made a splendid leap. I'm no Batroc, but I'm energized. This book has me buzzing creatively.

Shadowy, noir stories are something I've been hoping to do for a while. David constantly pushes his work, and on DEFENDERS, he's hit a new level. I love seeing pages arrive. Meanwhile, I've been enjoying Brian's street-level stories since ALIAS was originally in stores. Reading the scripts for these issues stokes my imagination and gets me amped to work. I'm happy to be included on the team with two guys I trust and admire.

If you're reading this, thank you. We've been working hard to get DEFENDERS just right. I appreciate that you decided to pick it up.

-Justin Ponsor

NEXT!

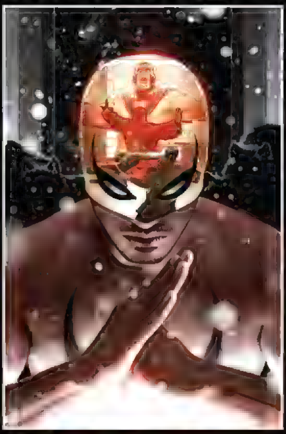


DEFENDERS #2

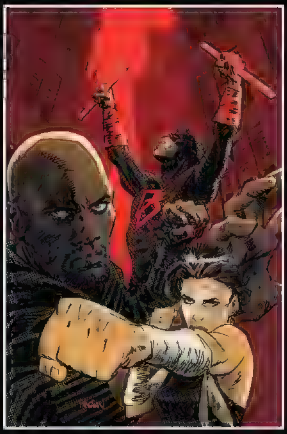
ALL ON SALE THIS MONTH!

JESSICA JONES
#9

LUKE CAGE
#2



IRON FIST
#4



DAREDEVIL
#21

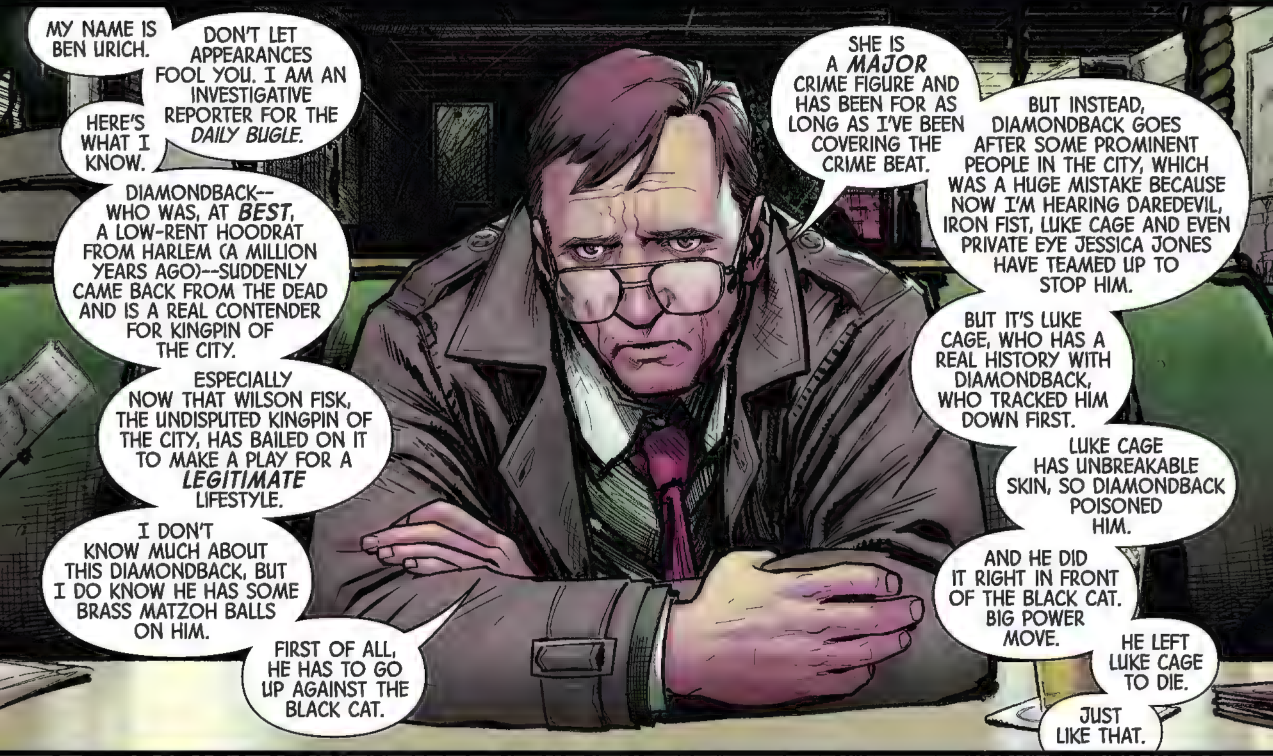
DAREDEVIL · LUKE CAGE · JESSICA JONES · IRON FIST

THE DEFENDERS

BENDIS • MARQUEZ • PONSOR

MARVEL #2

MARQUEZ! J.Po 2017


MY NAME IS BEN URICH.
DON'T LET APPEARANCES FOOL YOU. I AM AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER FOR THE *DAILY BUGLE.*
HERE'S WHAT I KNOW.
DIAMONDBACK--WHO WAS, AT ***BEST,*** A LOW-RENT HOODRAT FROM HARLEM (A MILLION YEARS AGO)--SUDDENLY CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD AND IS A REAL CONTENDER FOR KINGPIN OF THE CITY.
ESPECIALLY NOW THAT WILSON FISK, THE UNDISPUTED KINGPIN OF THE CITY, HAS BAILED ON IT TO MAKE A PLAY FOR A ***LEGITIMATE*** LIFESTYLE.
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THIS DIAMONDBACK, BUT I DO KNOW HE HAS SOME BRASS MATZOH BALLS ON HIM.
FIRST OF ALL, HE HAS TO GO UP AGAINST THE BLACK CAT.
SHE IS A ***MAJOR*** CRIME FIGURE AND HAS BEEN FOR AS LONG AS I'VE BEEN COVERING THE CRIME BEAT.
BUT INSTEAD, DIAMONDBACK GOES AFTER SOME PROMINENT PEOPLE IN THE CITY, WHICH WAS A HUGE MISTAKE BECAUSE NOW I'M HEARING DAREDEVIL, IRON FIST, LUKE CAGE AND EVEN PRIVATE EYE JESSICA JONES HAVE TEAMED UP TO STOP HIM.
BUT IT'S LUKE CAGE, WHO HAS A REAL HISTORY WITH DIAMONDBACK, WHO TRACKED HIM DOWN FIRST.
LUKE CAGE HAS UNBREAKABLE SKIN, SO DIAMONDBACK POISONED HIM.
AND HE DID IT RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE BLACK CAT. BIG POWER MOVE.
HE LEFT LUKE CAGE TO DIE.
JUST LIKE THAT.

THE DEFENDERS

WRITER
BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS

ARTIST
DAVID MARQUEZ

COLOR ARTIST
JUSTIN PONSOR

LETTERER
VC's CORY PETIT

COVER ARTISTS
DAVID MARQUEZ & JUSTIN PONSOR

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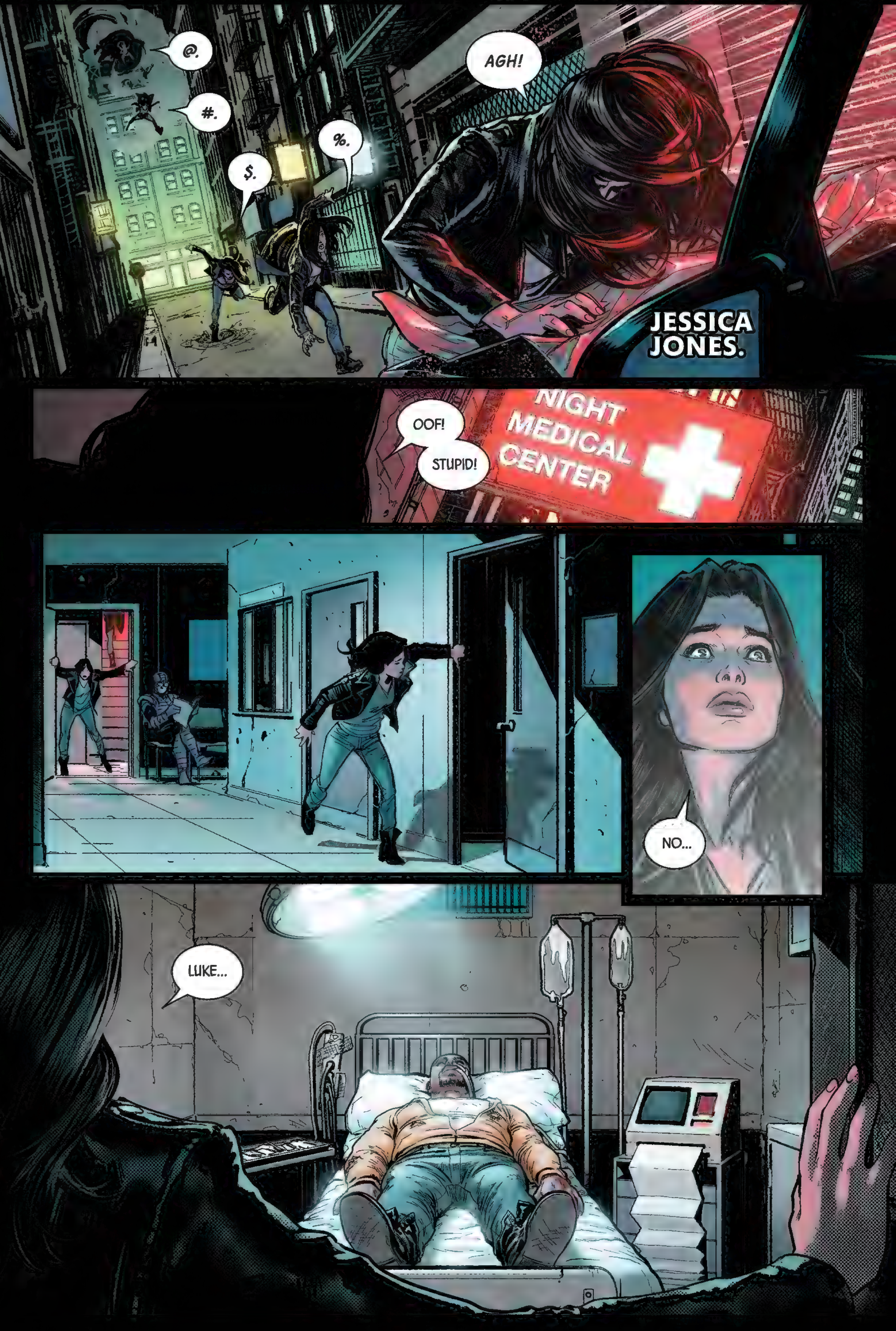
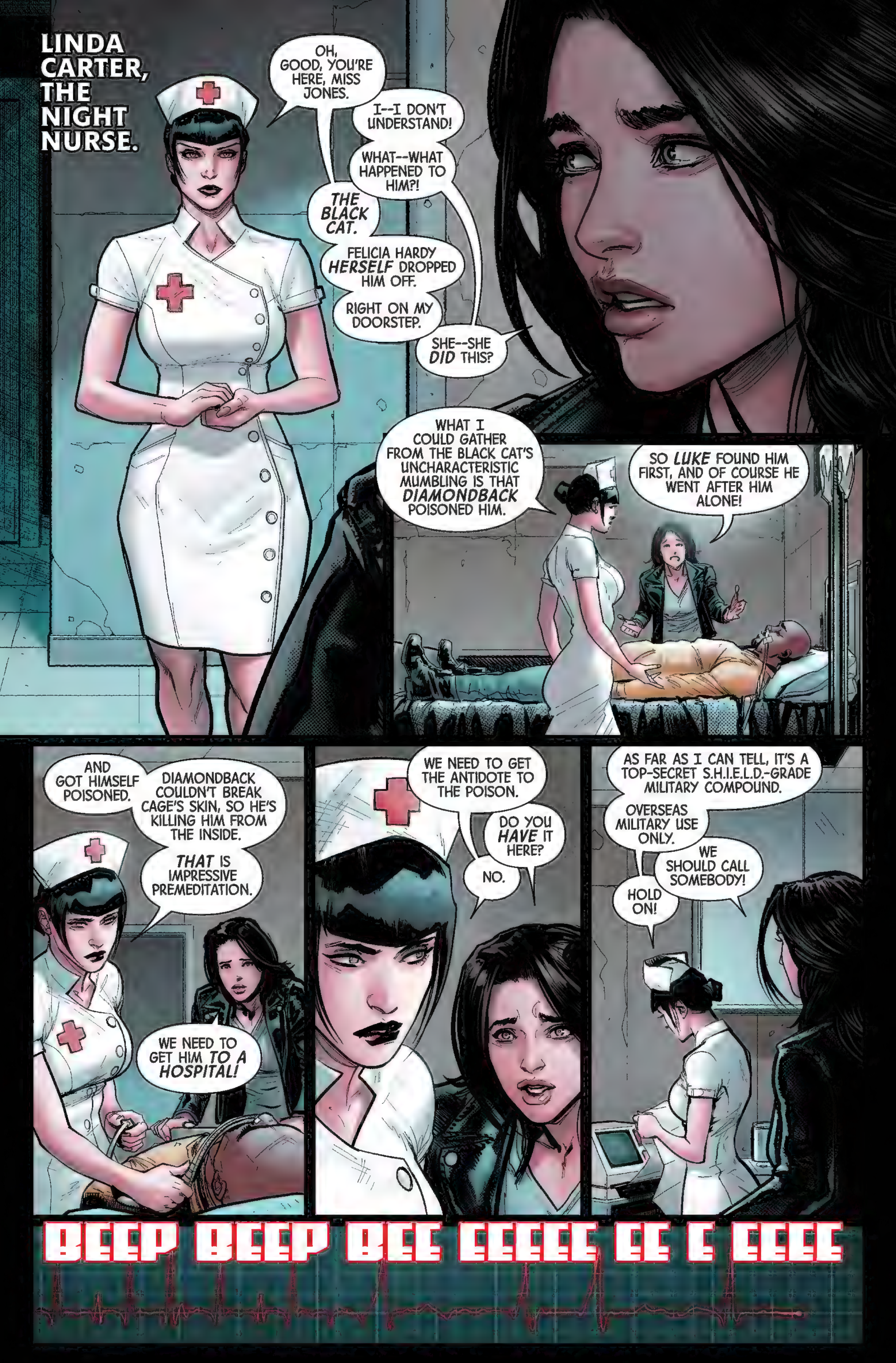
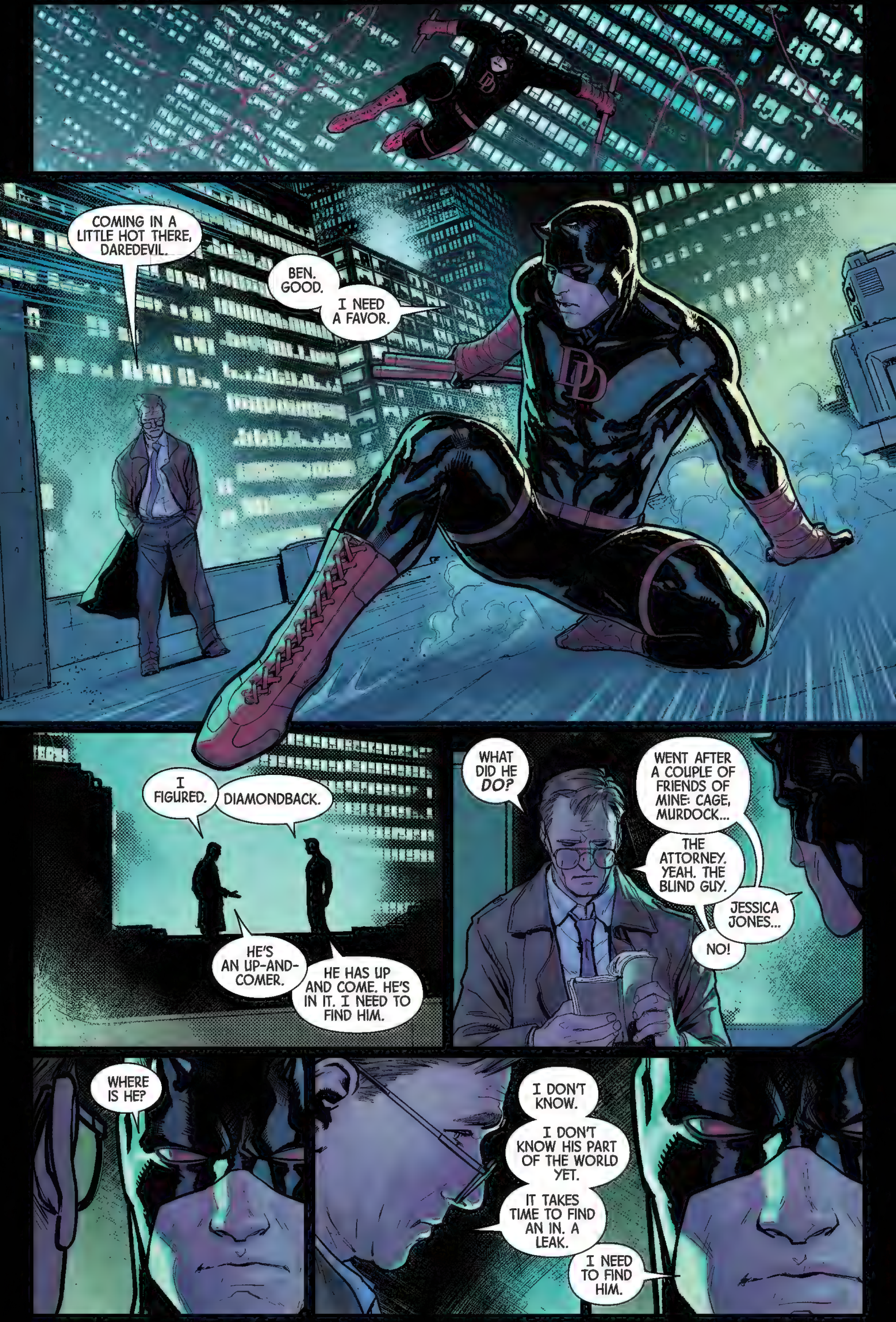
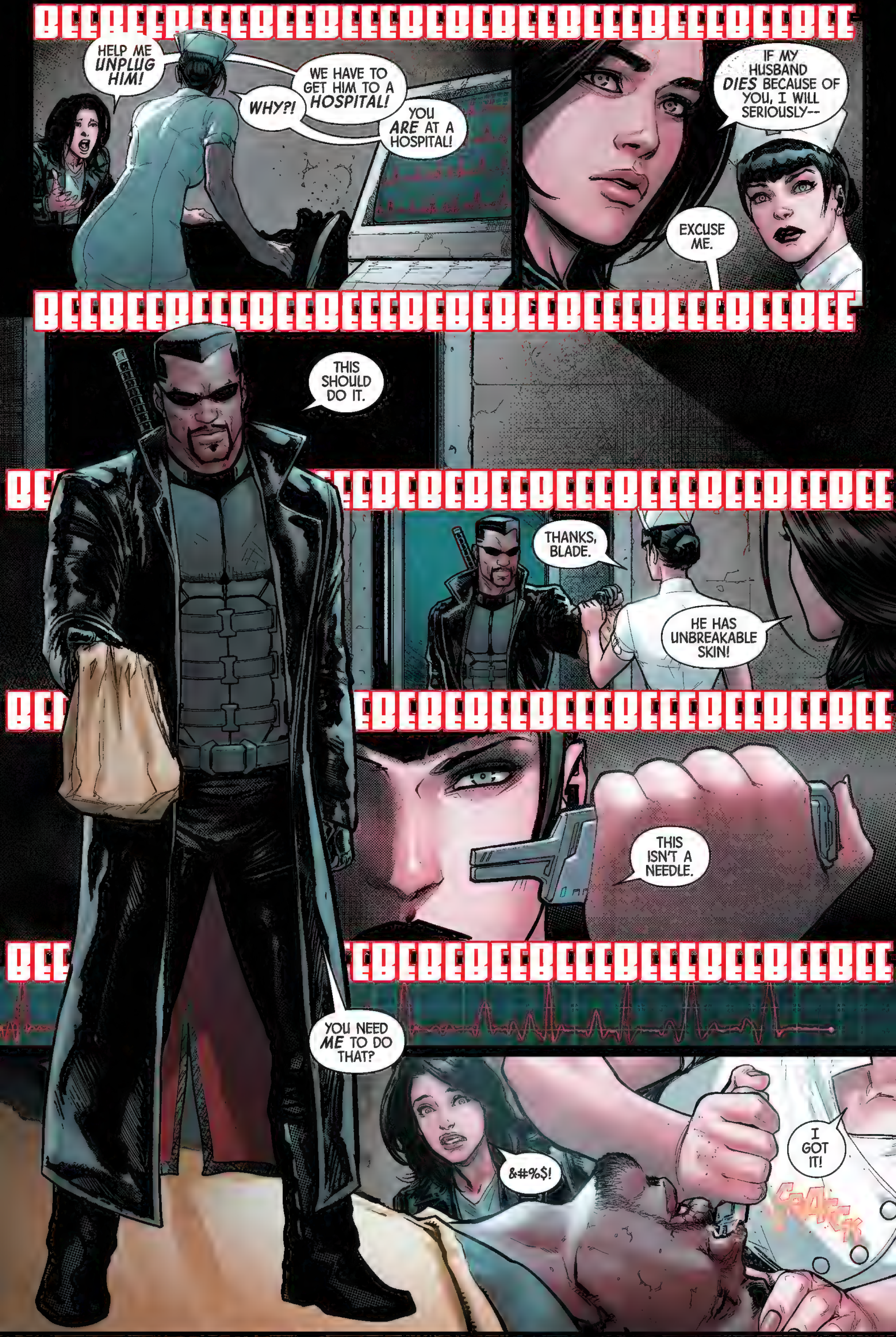
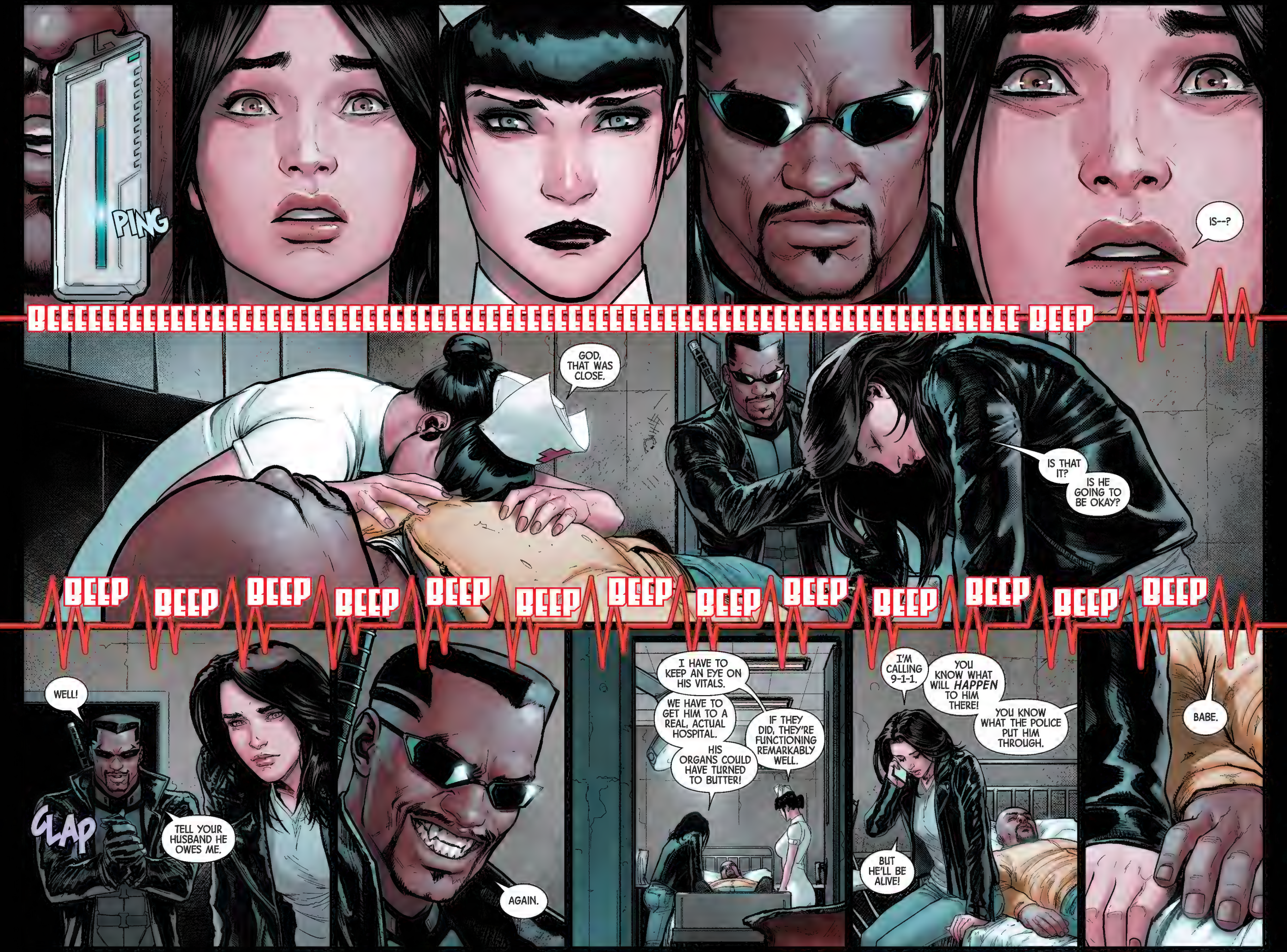
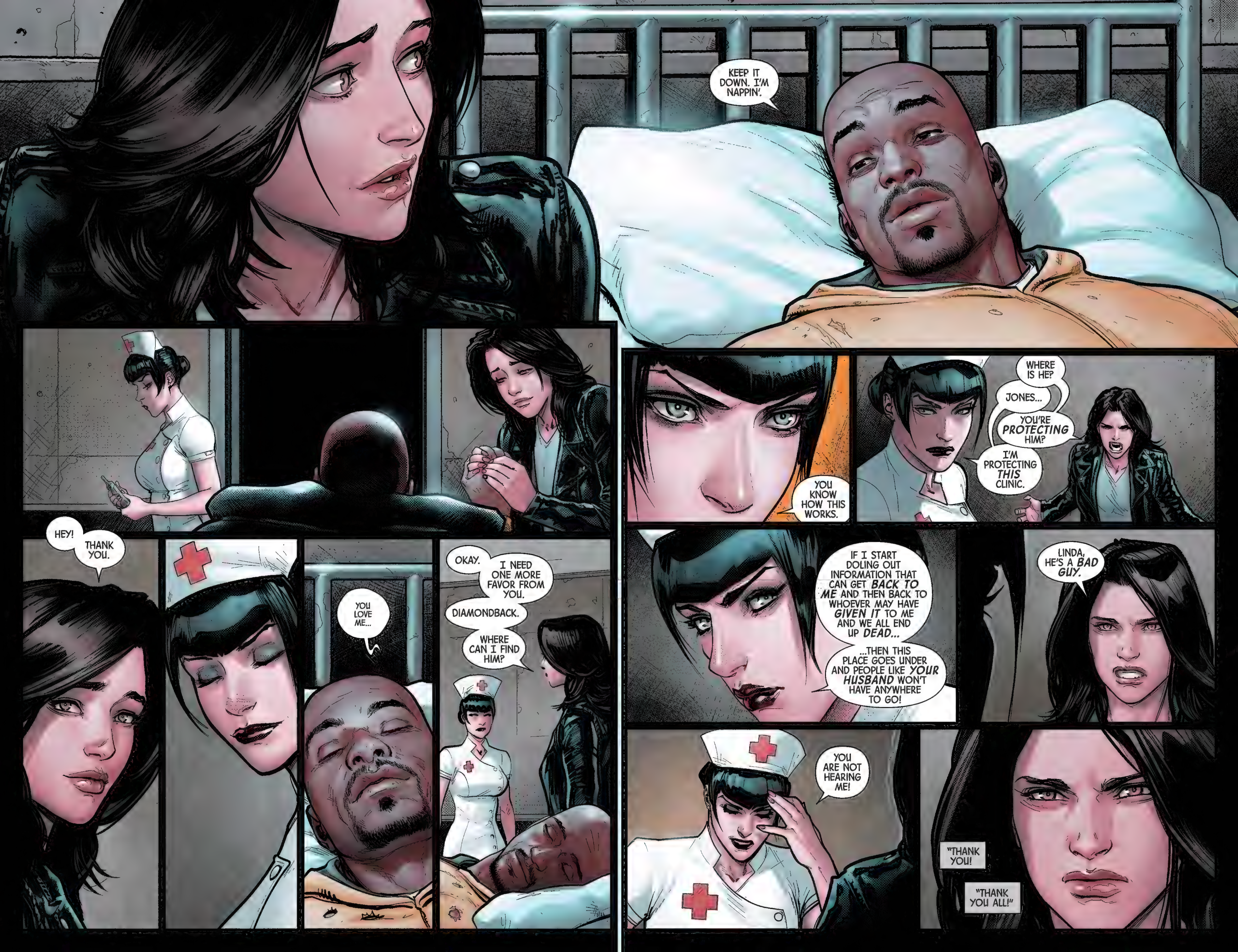

@.
#.
$.
%.
AGH!
JESSICA JONES.
OOF!
STUPID!
NIGHT MEDICAL CENTER
NO...
LUKE...

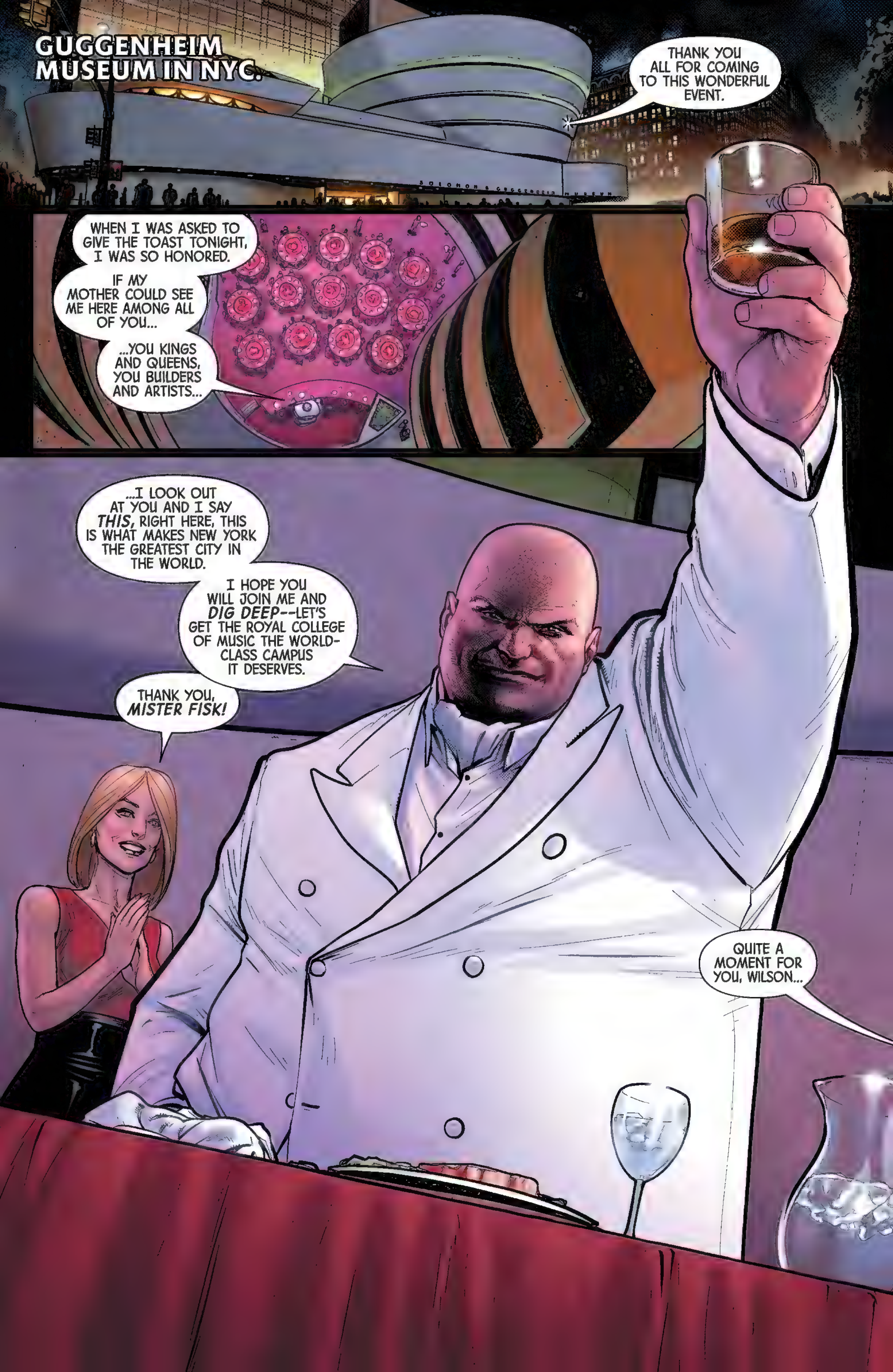

LINDA CARTER, THE NIGHT NURSE.
OH, GOOD, YOU'RE HERE, MISS JONES.
I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
WHAT--WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?!
THE BLACK CAT.
FELICIA HARDY *HERSELF* DROPPED HIM OFF.
RIGHT ON MY DOORSTEP.
SHE--SHE *DID* THIS?
WHAT I COULD GATHER FROM THE BLACK CAT'S UNCHARACTERISTIC MUMBLING IS THAT *DIAMONDBACK* POISONED HIM.
SO *LUKE* FOUND HIM FIRST, AND OF COURSE HE WENT AFTER HIM ALONE!
AND GOT HIMSELF POISONED.
DIAMONDBACK COULDN'T BREAK CAGE'S SKIN, SO HE'S KILLING HIM FROM THE INSIDE.
THAT IS IMPRESSIVE PREMEDITATION.
WE NEED TO GET HIM *TO A HOSPITAL!*
WE NEED TO GET THE ANTIDOTE TO THE POISON.
DO YOU *HAVE* IT HERE?
NO.
AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, IT'S A TOP-SECRET S.H.I.E.L.D.-GRADE MILITARY COMPOUND.
OVERSEAS MILITARY USE ONLY.
WE SHOULD CALL SOMEBODY!
HOLD ON!
BEEP BEEP BEE EEEEE EE E EEEE

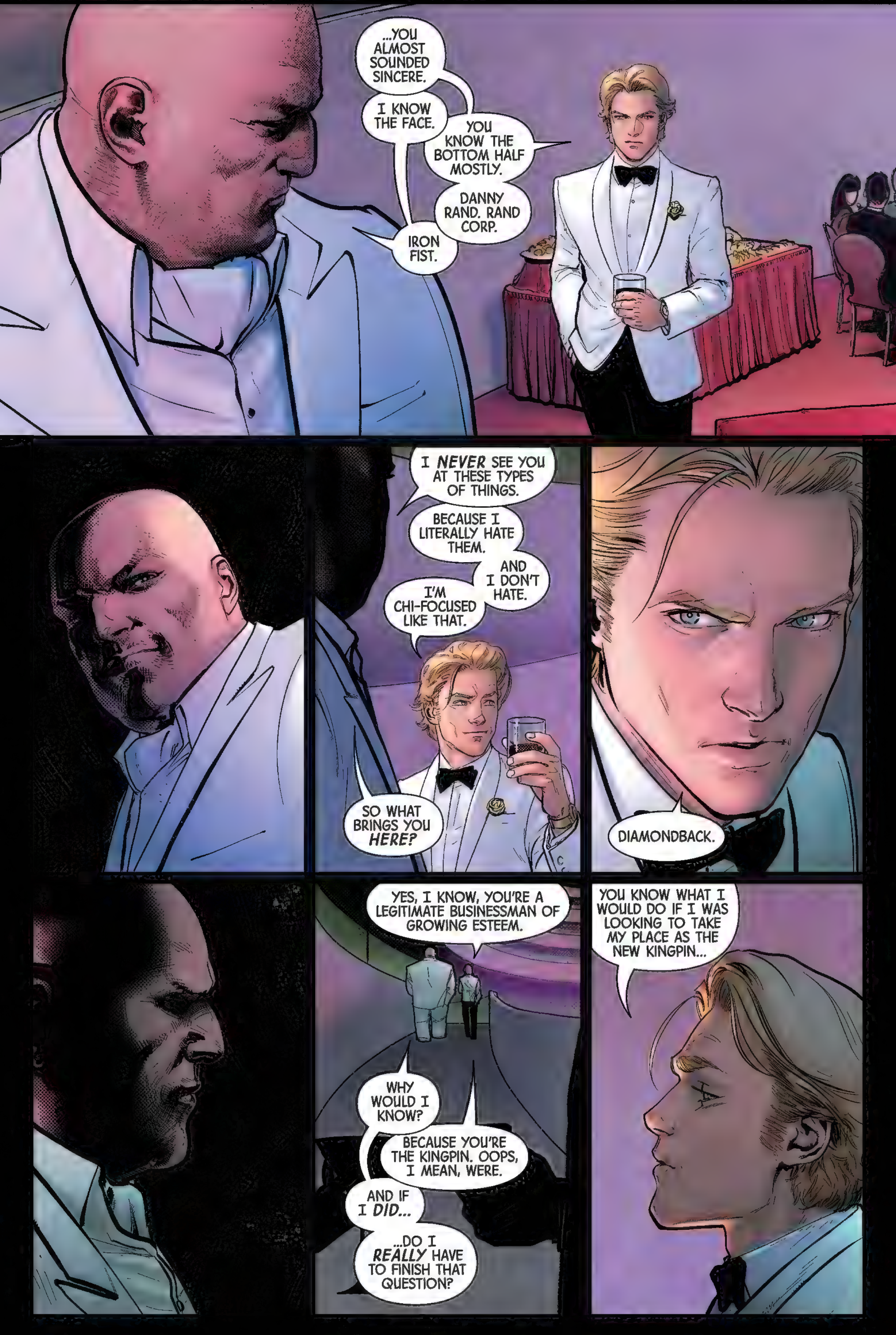

COMING IN A LITTLE HOT THERE, DAREDEVIL.
BEN. GOOD.
I NEED A FAVOR.
I FIGURED.
DIAMONDBACK.
HE'S AN UP-AND-COMER.
HE HAS UP AND COME. HE'S IN IT. I NEED TO FIND HIM.
WHAT DID HE *DO?*
WENT AFTER A COUPLE OF FRIENDS OF MINE: CAGE, MURDOCK...
THE ATTORNEY. YEAH. THE BLIND GUY.
JESSICA JONES...
NO!
WHERE IS HE?
I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T KNOW HIS PART OF THE WORLD YET.
IT TAKES TIME TO FIND AN IN. A LEAK.
I NEED TO FIND HIM.

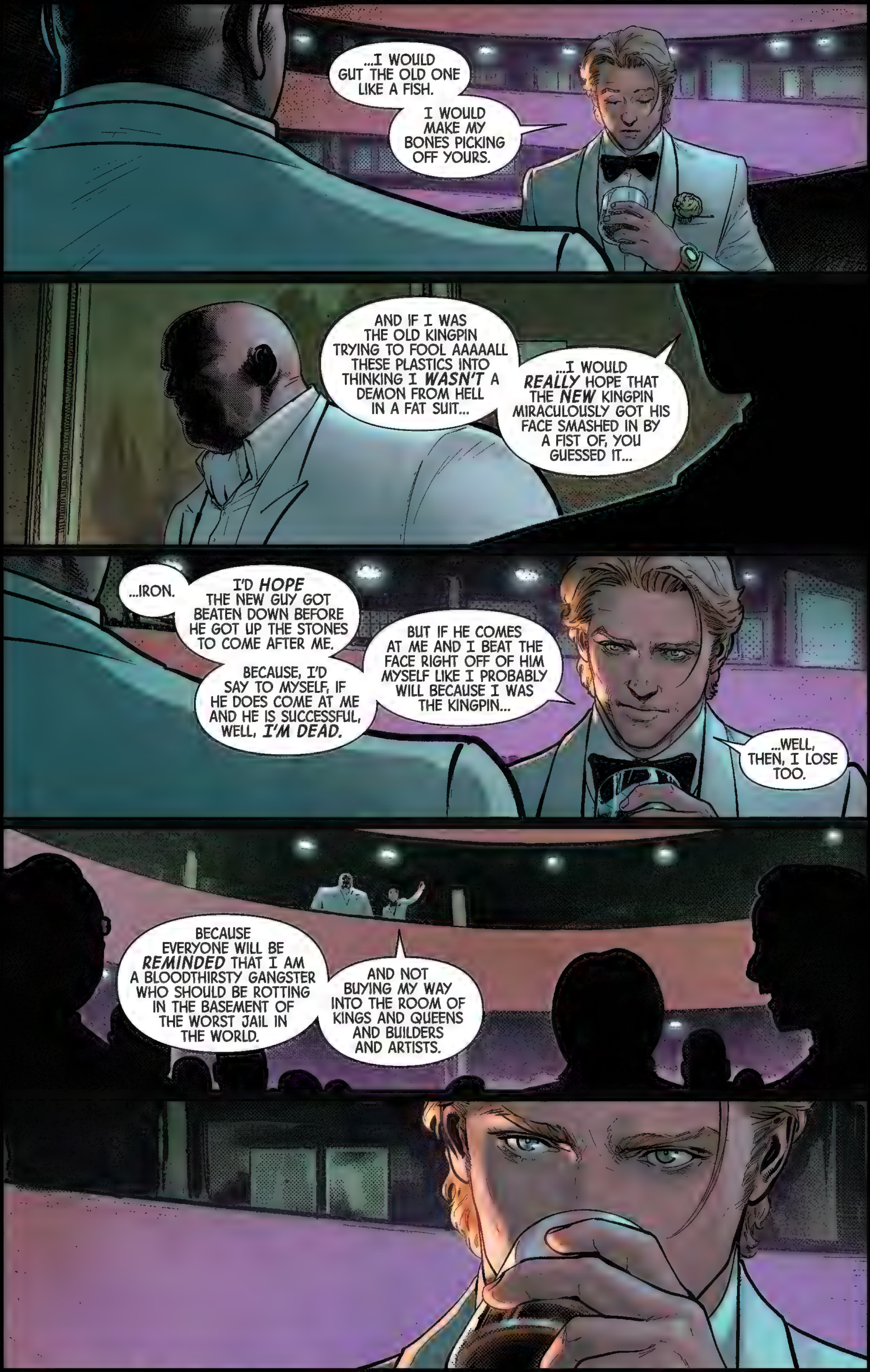

BEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEE
HELP ME *UNPLUG* HIM!
WE HAVE TO GET HIM TO A *HOSPITAL!*
WHY?!
YOU *ARE* AT A HOSPITAL!
IF MY HUSBAND *DIES* BECAUSE OF YOU, I WILL SERIOUSLY--
EXCUSE ME.
BEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEE
THIS SHOULD DO IT.
BEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEE
THANKS, BLADE.
HE HAS UNBREAKABLE SKIN!
BEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEE
THIS ISN'T A NEEDLE.
BEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEEBEE
YOU NEED *ME* TO DO THAT?
&#%$!
I GOT IT!
CRAKK

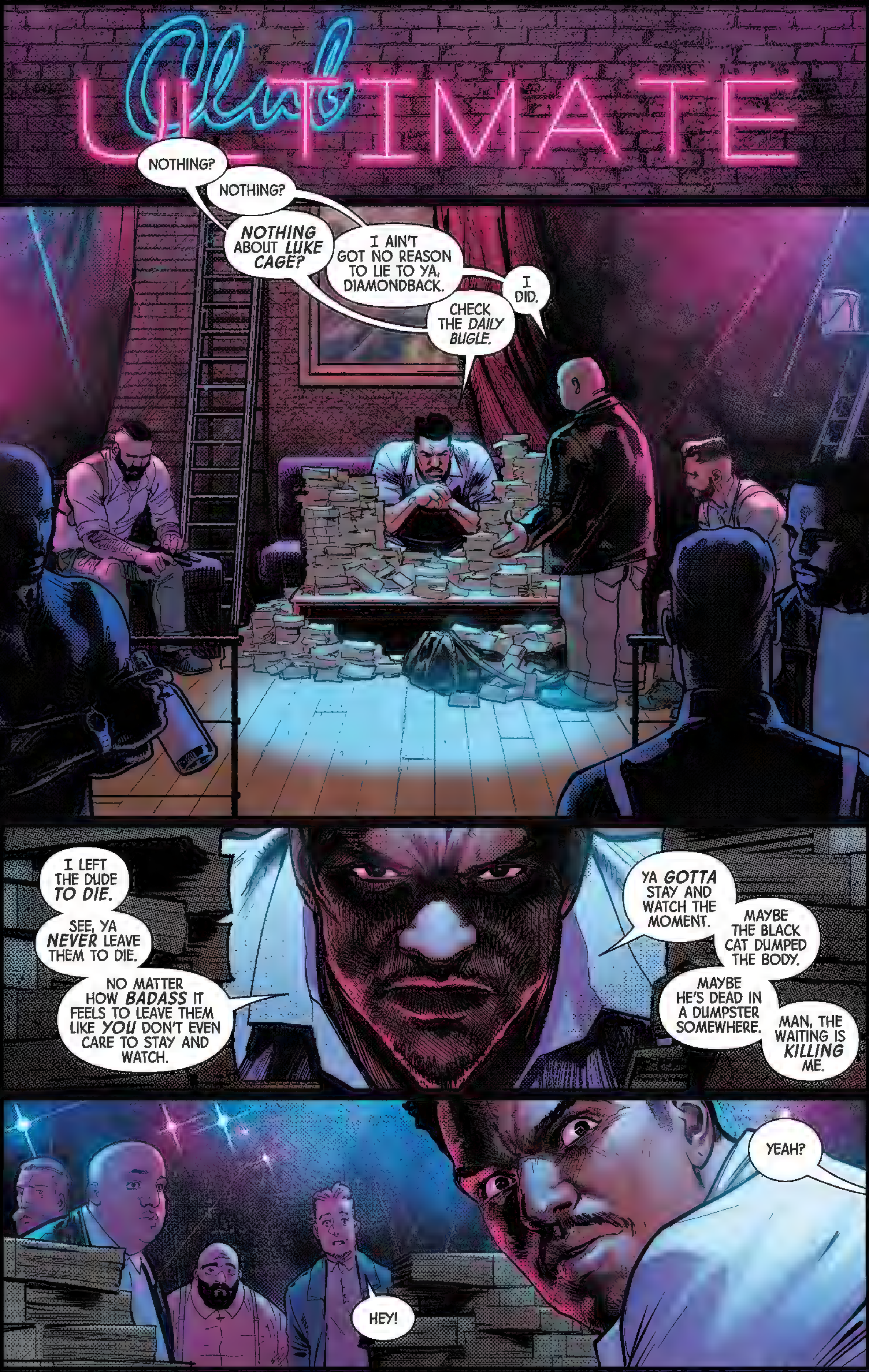

PING
IS--?
BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE BEEP
GOD, THAT WAS CLOSE.
IS THAT IT?
IS HE GOING TO BE OKAY?
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
WELL!
CLAP
TELL YOUR HUSBAND HE OWES ME.
AGAIN.
I HAVE TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIS VITALS.
WE HAVE TO GET HIM TO A REAL, ACTUAL HOSPITAL.
HIS ORGANS COULD HAVE TURNED TO BUTTER!
IF THEY DID, THEY'RE FUNCTIONING REMARKABLY WELL.
I'M CALLING 9-1-1.
YOU KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HIM THERE!
YOU KNOW WHAT THE POLICE PUT HIM THROUGH.
BUT HE'LL BE ALIVE!
BABE.

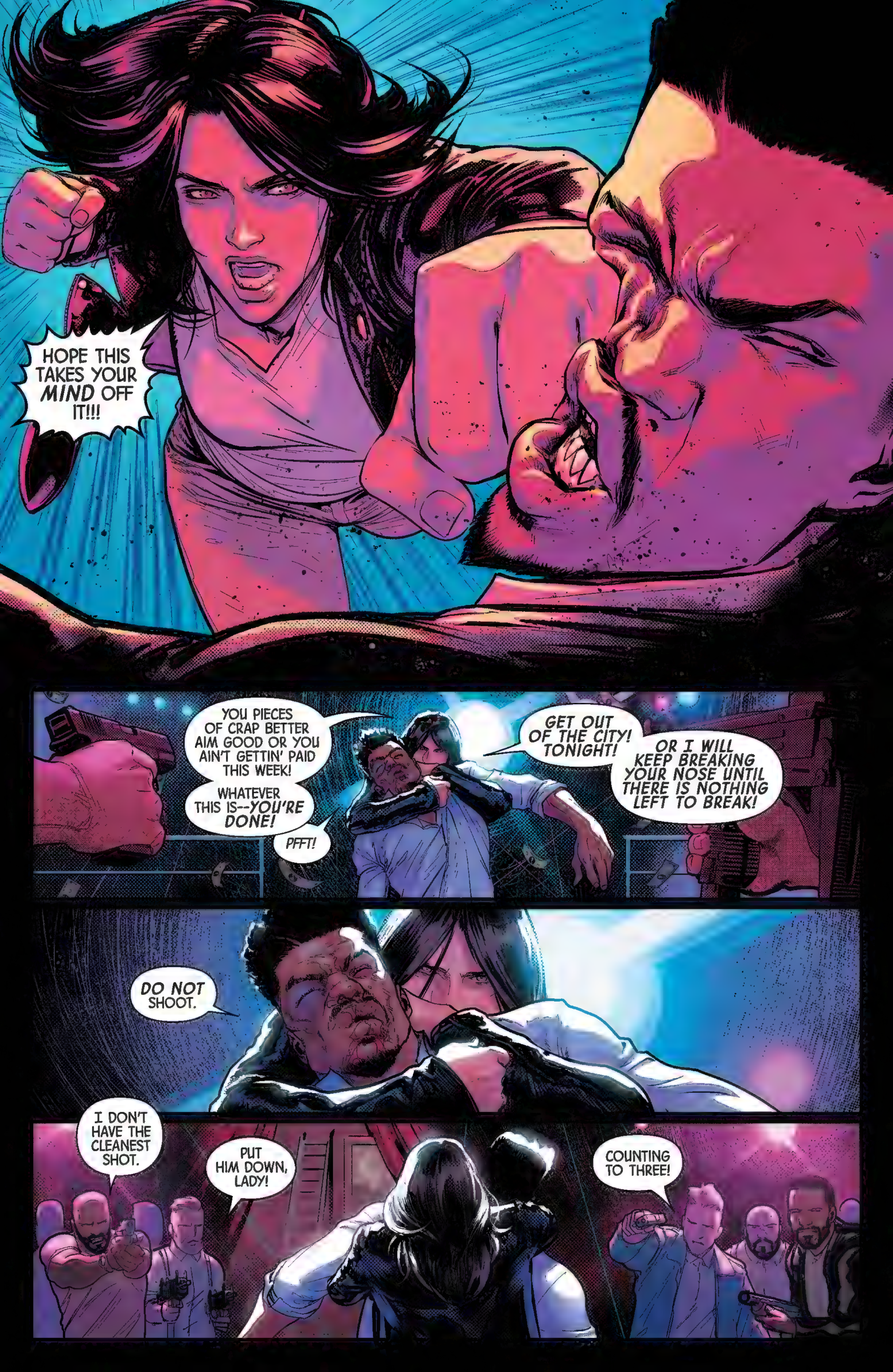

KEEP IT DOWN. I'M NAPPIN'.
HEY!
THANK YOU.
YOU LOVE ME...
OKAY.
I NEED ONE MORE FAVOR FROM YOU.
DIAMONDBACK.
WHERE CAN I FIND HIM?
YOU KNOW HOW THIS WORKS.
WHERE IS HE?
JONES...
YOU'RE PROTECTING HIM?
I'M PROTECTING THIS CLINIC.
IF I START DOLING OUT INFORMATION THAT CAN GET BACK TO ME AND THEN BACK TO WHOEVER MAY HAVE GIVEN IT TO ME AND WE ALL END UP DEAD...
...THEN THIS PLACE GOES UNDER AND PEOPLE LIKE YOUR HUSBAND WON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO!
LINDA, HE'S A BAD GUY.
YOU ARE NOT HEARING ME!
"THANK YOU!
"THANK YOU ALL!"

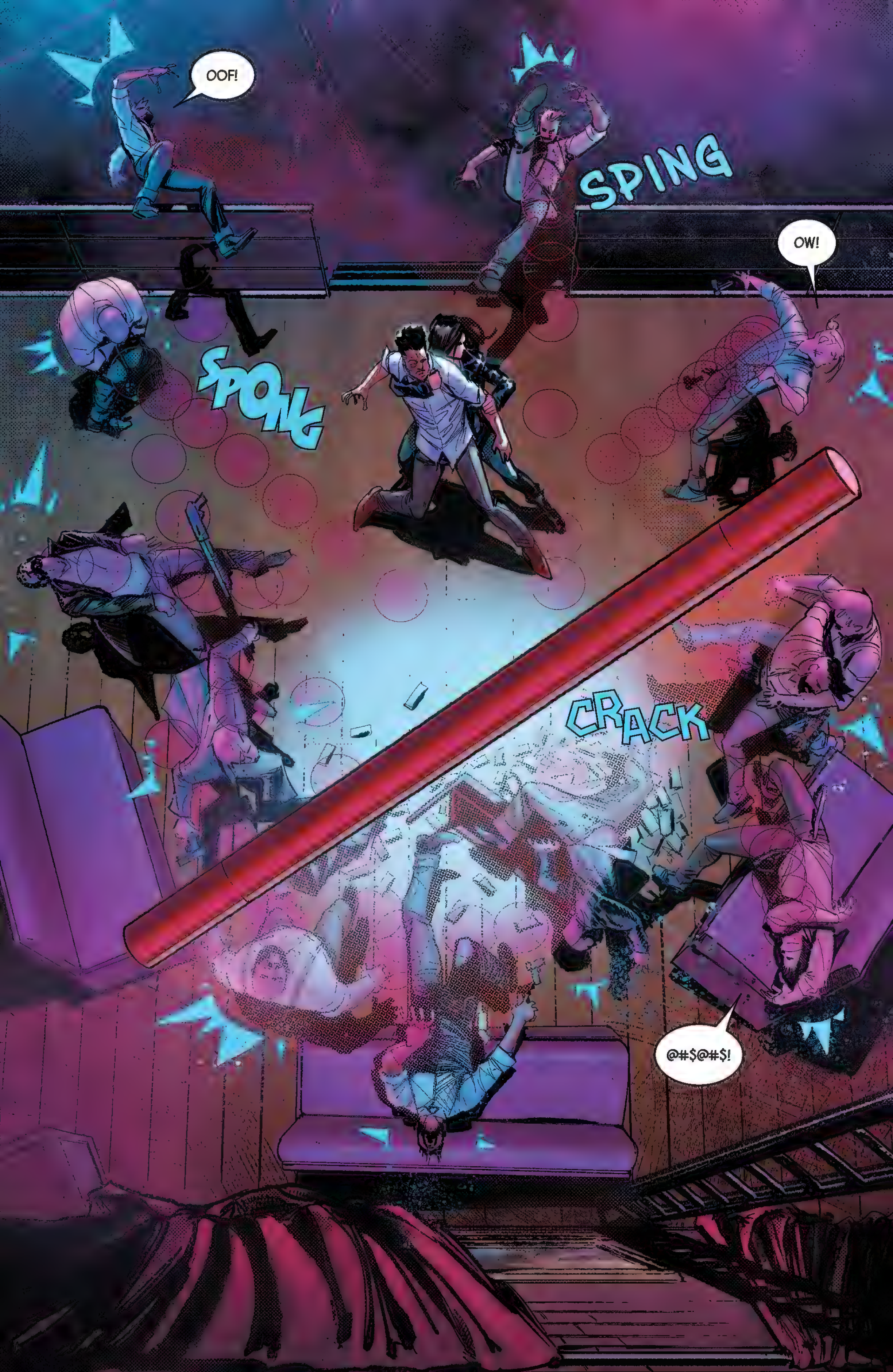

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM IN NYC.
THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING TO THIS WONDERFUL EVENT.
SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
WHEN I WAS ASKED TO GIVE THE TOAST TONIGHT, I WAS SO HONORED.
IF MY MOTHER COULD SEE ME HERE AMONG ALL OF YOU...
...YOU KINGS AND QUEENS, YOU BUILDERS AND ARTISTS...
...I LOOK OUT AT YOU AND I SAY *THIS,* RIGHT HERE, THIS IS WHAT MAKES NEW YORK THE GREATEST CITY IN THE WORLD.
I HOPE YOU WILL JOIN ME AND *DIG DEEP*--LET'S GET THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC THE WORLD-CLASS CAMPUS IT DESERVES.
THANK YOU, *MISTER FISK!*
QUITE A MOMENT FOR YOU, WILSON...

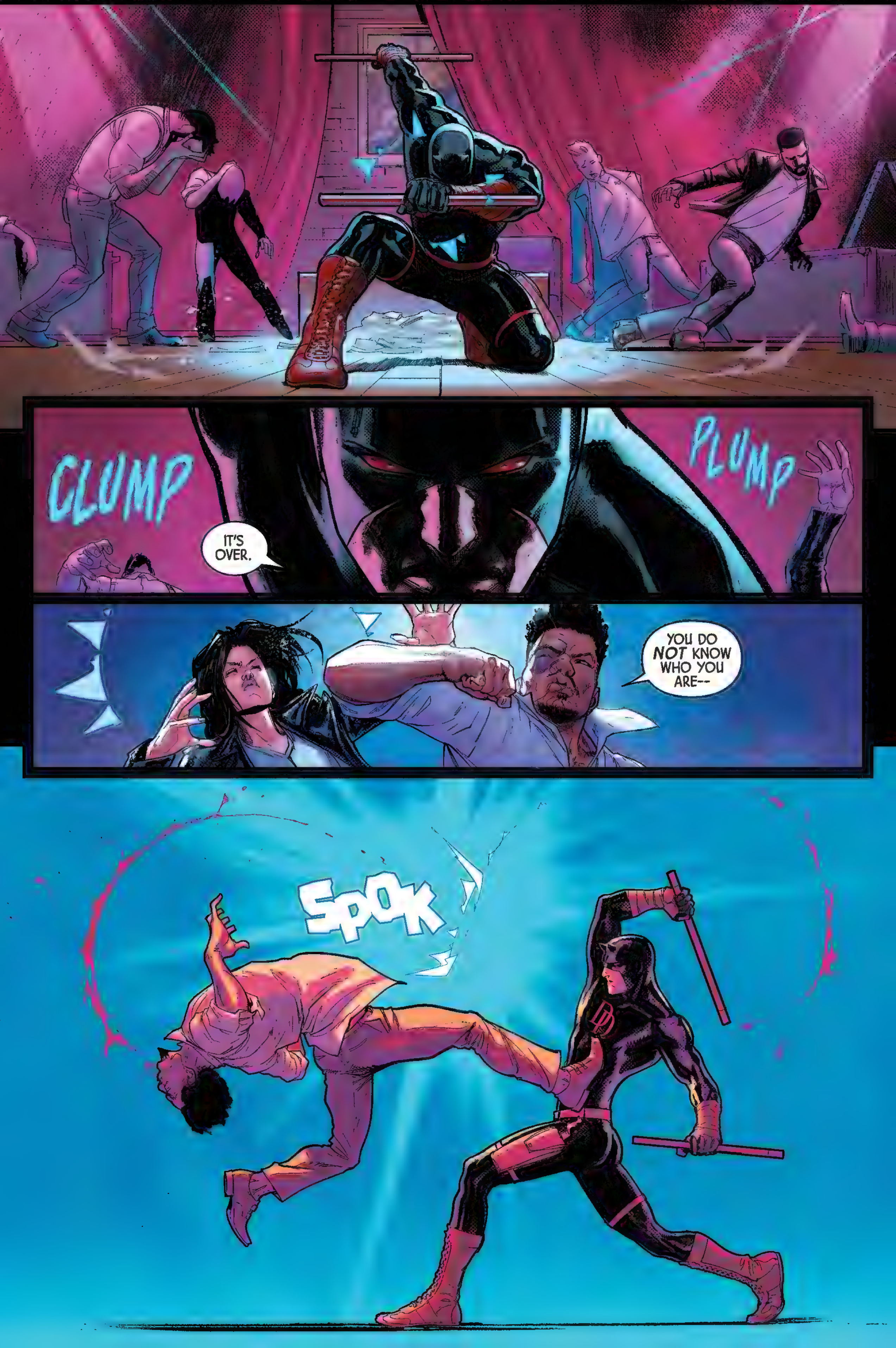

...YOU ALMOST SOUNDED SINCERE.
I KNOW THE FACE.
YOU KNOW THE BOTTOM HALF MOSTLY.
DANNY RAND. RAND CORP.
IRON FIST.
I *NEVER* SEE YOU AT THESE TYPES OF THINGS.
BECAUSE I LITERALLY HATE THEM.
AND I DON'T HATE.
I'M CHI-FOCUSED LIKE THAT.
SO WHAT BRINGS YOU *HERE?*
DIAMONDBACK.
YES, I KNOW, YOU'RE A LEGITIMATE BUSINESSMAN OF GROWING ESTEEM.
WHY WOULD I KNOW?
BECAUSE YOU'RE THE KINGPIN. OOPS, I MEAN, WERE.
AND IF I *DID*...
...DO I *REALLY* HAVE TO FINISH THAT QUESTION?
YOU KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO IF I WAS LOOKING TO TAKE MY PLACE AS THE NEW KINGPIN...

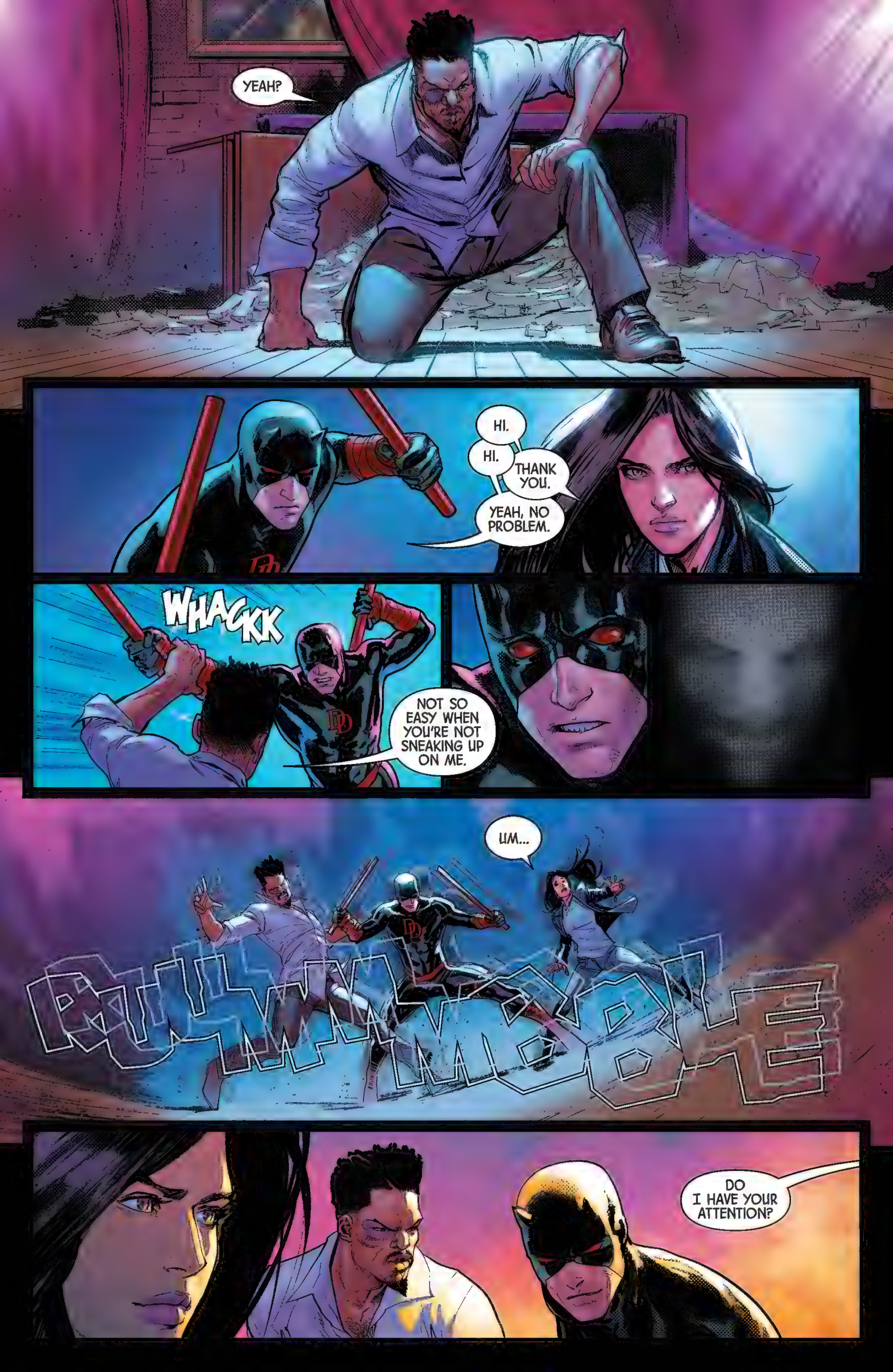

...I WOULD GUT THE OLD ONE LIKE A FISH.
I WOULD MAKE MY BONES PICKING OFF YOURS.
AND IF I WAS THE OLD KINGPIN TRYING TO FOOL AAAAALL THESE PLASTICS INTO THINKING I *WASN'T* A DEMON FROM HELL IN A FAT SUIT...
...I WOULD *REALLY* HOPE THAT THE *NEW* KINGPIN MIRACULOUSLY GOT HIS FACE SMASHED IN BY A FIST OF, YOU GUESSED IT...
...IRON.
I'D *HOPE* THE NEW GUY GOT BEATEN DOWN BEFORE HE GOT UP THE STONES TO COME AFTER ME.
BECAUSE, I'D SAY TO MYSELF, IF HE DOES COME AT ME AND HE IS SUCCESSFUL, WELL, *I'M DEAD.*
BUT IF HE COMES AT ME AND I BEAT THE FACE RIGHT OFF OF HIM MYSELF LIKE I PROBABLY WILL BECAUSE I WAS THE KINGPIN...
...WELL, THEN, I LOSE TOO.
BECAUSE EVERYONE WILL BE *REMINDED* THAT I AM A BLOODTHIRSTY GANGSTER WHO SHOULD BE ROTTING IN THE BASEMENT OF THE WORST JAIL IN THE WORLD.
AND NOT BUYING MY WAY INTO THE ROOM OF KINGS AND QUEENS AND BUILDERS AND ARTISTS.

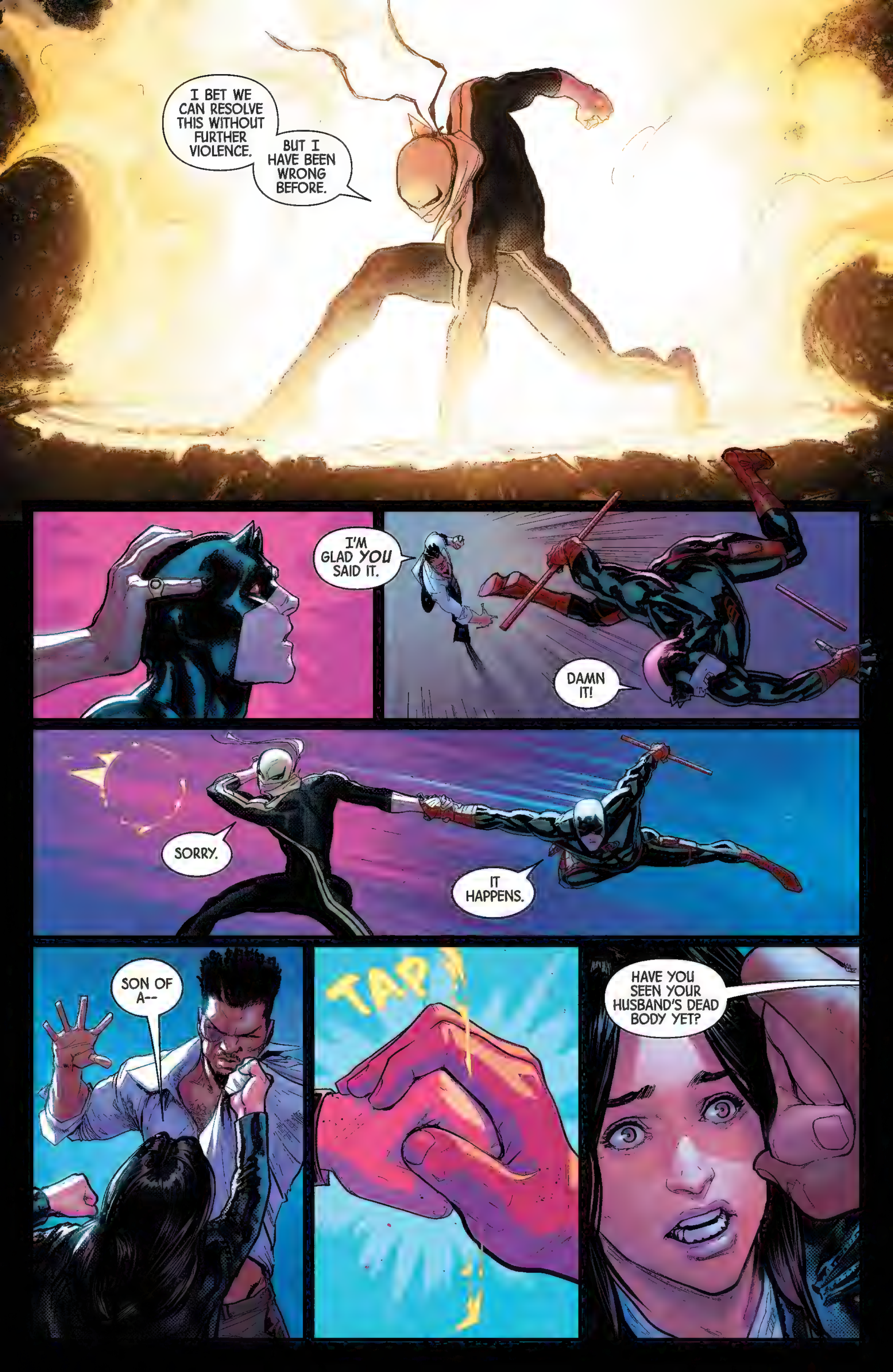

Club
ULTIMATE
NOTHING?
NOTHING?
NOTHING ABOUT LUKE CAGE?
I AIN'T GOT NO REASON TO LIE TO YA, DIAMONDBACK.
I DID.
CHECK THE DAILY BUGLE.
I LEFT THE DUDE TO DIE.
SEE, YA NEVER LEAVE THEM TO DIE.
NO MATTER HOW BADASS IT FEELS TO LEAVE THEM LIKE YOU DON'T EVEN CARE TO STAY AND WATCH.
YA GOTTA STAY AND WATCH THE MOMENT.
MAYBE THE BLACK CAT DUMPED THE BODY.
MAYBE HE'S DEAD IN A DUMPSTER SOMEWHERE.
MAN, THE WAITING IS KILLING ME.
YEAH?
HEY!

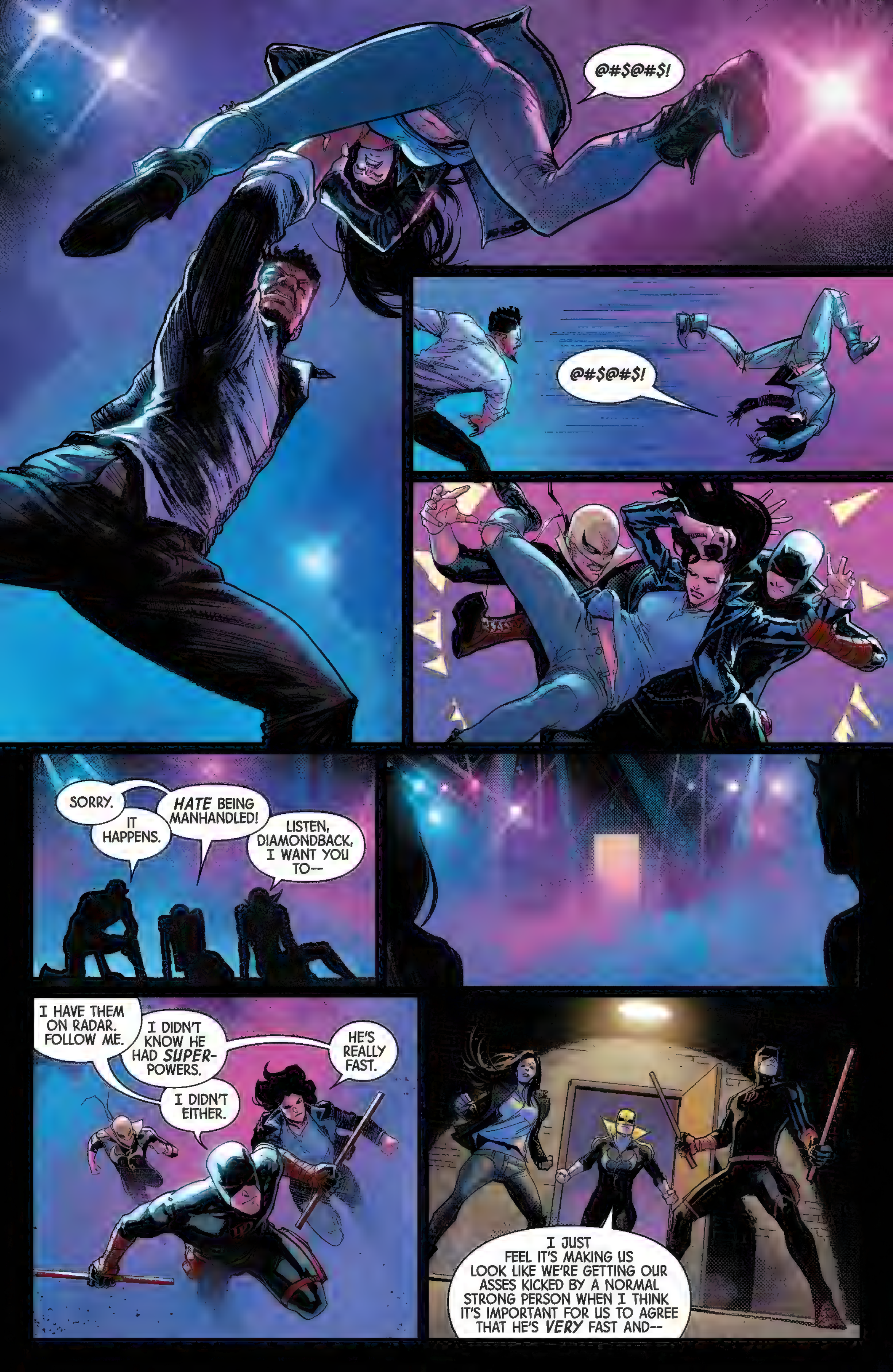

HOPE THIS TAKES YOUR *MIND* OFF IT!!!
YOU PIECES OF CRAP BETTER AIM GOOD OR YOU AIN'T GETTIN' PAID THIS WEEK!
WHATEVER THIS IS--*YOU'RE DONE!*
PFFT!
GET OUT OF THE CITY! TONIGHT!
OR I WILL KEEP BREAKING YOUR NOSE UNTIL THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO BREAK!
DO NOT SHOOT.
I DON'T HAVE THE CLEANEST SHOT.
PUT HIM DOWN, LADY!
COUNTING TO THREE!

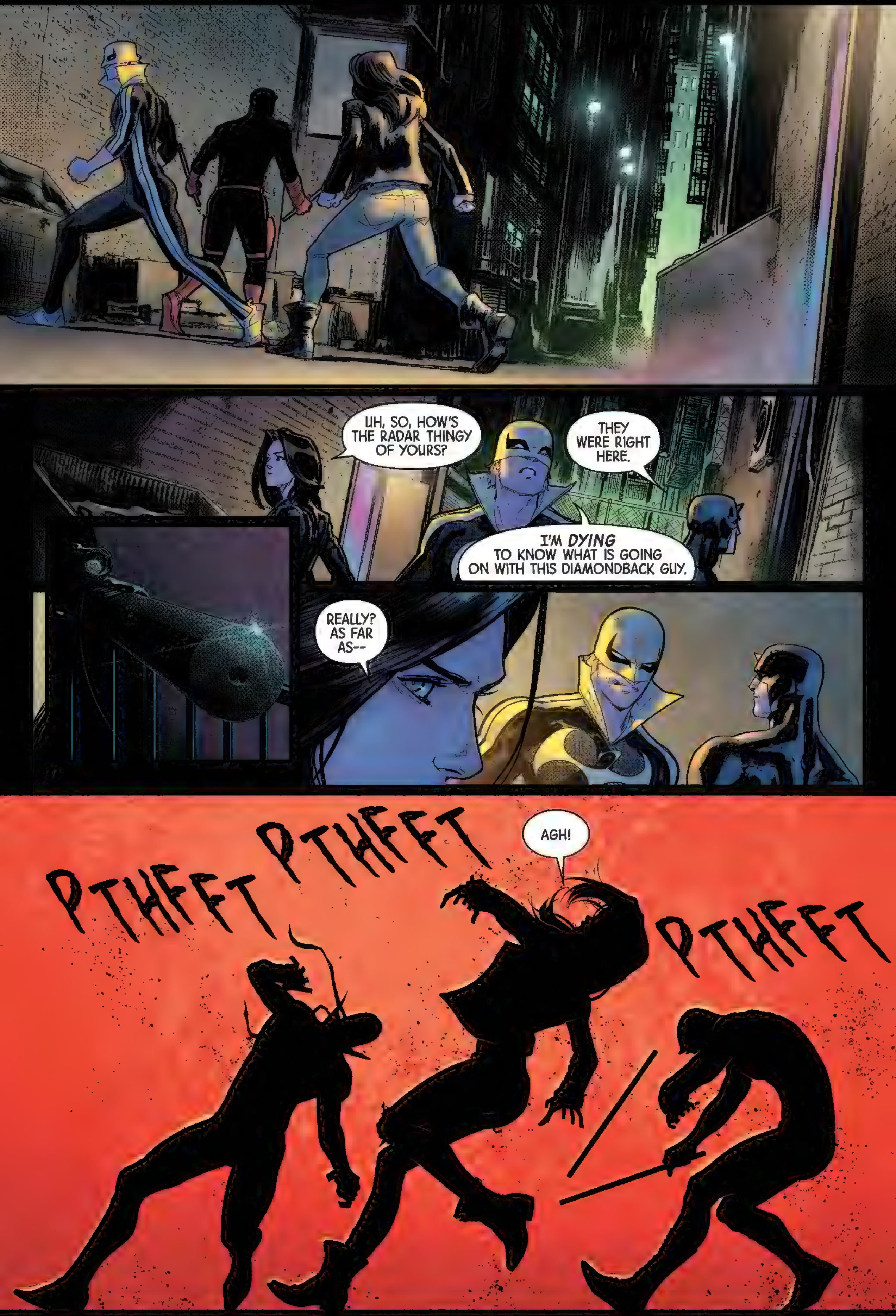

OOF!
SPING
OW!
SPONG
CRACK
@#$@#$!

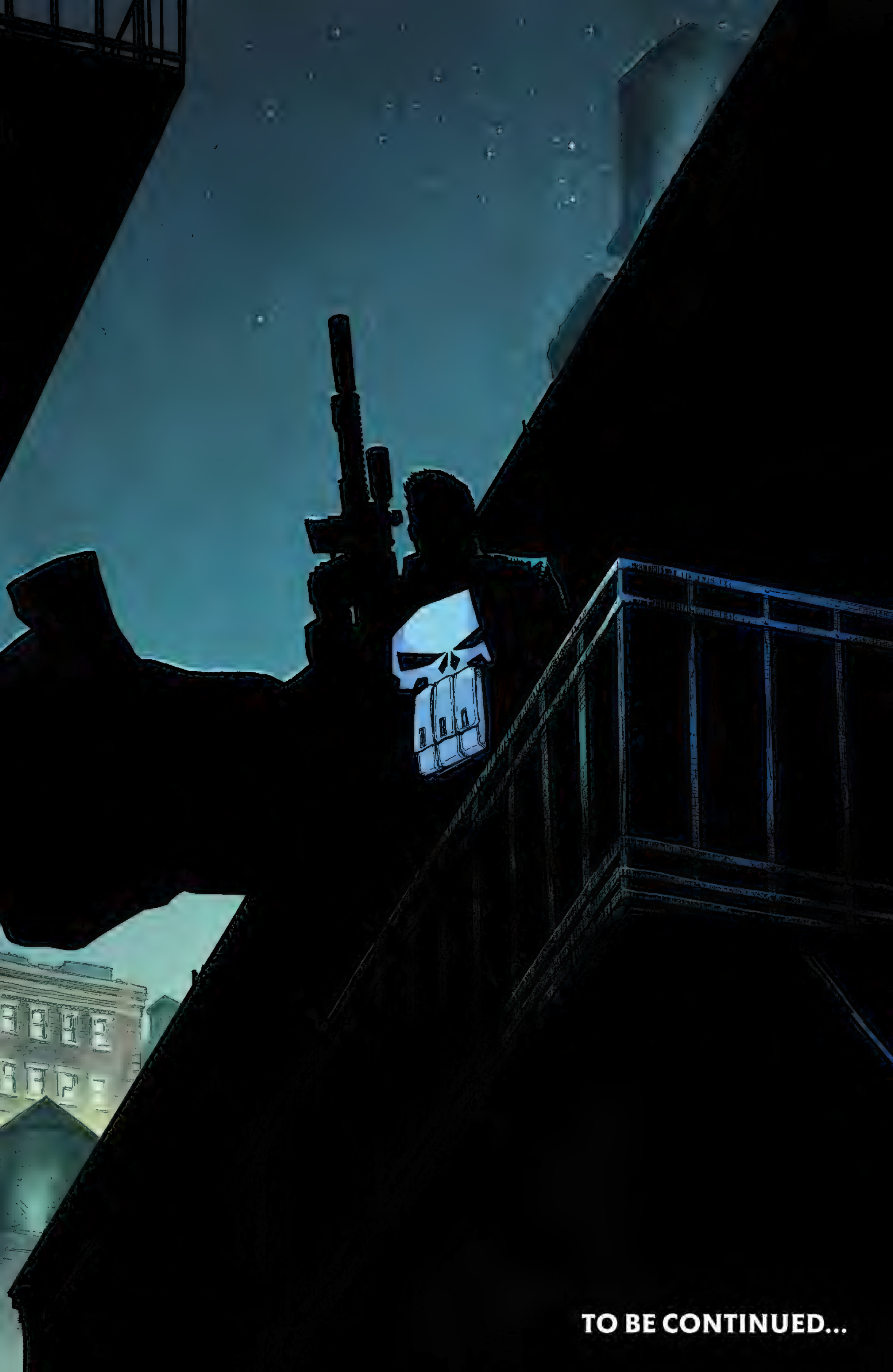

CLUMP
IT'S OVER.
PLUMP
YOU DO *NOT* KNOW WHO YOU ARE--
SPOK


YEAH?
HI.
HI.
THANK YOU.
YEAH, NO PROBLEM.
WHACKK
NOT SO EASY WHEN YOU'RE NOT SNEAKING UP ON ME.
UM...
DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?


I BET WE CAN RESOLVE THIS WITHOUT FURTHER VIOLENCE.
BUT I HAVE BEEN WRONG BEFORE.
I'M GLAD *YOU* SAID IT.
DAMN IT!
SORRY.
IT HAPPENS.
SON OF A--
TAP
HAVE YOU SEEN YOUR HUSBAND'S DEAD BODY YET?


@#$@#$!
@#$@#$!
SORRY.
IT HAPPENS.
HATE BEING MANHANDLED!
LISTEN, DIAMONDBACK, I WANT YOU TO--
I HAVE THEM ON RADAR. FOLLOW ME.
I DIDN'T KNOW HE HAD SUPER-POWERS.
HE'S REALLY FAST.
I DIDN'T EITHER.
I JUST FEEL IT'S MAKING US LOOK LIKE WE'RE GETTING OUR ASSES KICKED BY A NORMAL STRONG PERSON WHEN I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO AGREE THAT HE'S VERY FAST AND--


UH, SO, HOW'S THE RADAR THINGY OF YOURS?
THEY WERE RIGHT HERE.
I'M DYING TO KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON WITH THIS DIAMONDBACK GUY.
REALLY? AS FAR AS--
PTHFFT
PTHFFT
AGH!
PTHFFT


TO BE CONTINUED...

DAREDEVIL, THE HERO I NEED

THE PULSE

By Joe Robertson, Editor in Chief

Designed By Manny Mederos
Art By Alex Maleev

New York City.

We are lousy with super heroes.

Every day, as editor in chief of one of the largest newspapers in the entire world, I receive voluminous updates on numerous super hero activities throughout the city, the country and the world.

So why can't I stop thinking about Daredevil?

There has been many a night--and I know so many of you will sympathize with this--that I have slept on the couch in my office because I looked outside my window to see the traffic backed up down Fifth Avenue for as far as the eye can see. On the far, far end of the miles-and-miles-long parade of cars, you can clearly see the firefight of super heroes stopping someone from doing something. I remind myself that whatever stopped traffic that bad was probably going to do something far worse if not for our citywide surplus of super-powers. No matter how you look at it, it's better to be sitting alive in your car (or couch) than dead and vaporized by Doctor Doom's death ray you didn't even see coming.

Then there's the little things: I have caught myself worrying about Spider-Man if he doesn't swing by my office at least twice a day.

That is what it's like to live in New York City.

Every kind of super hero you can think of finds their way here. I don't know why. But 99 percent of them are here. The biggest question is why is 99 percent of the super-criminal activity is ALSO located here. Why are you here where all the super heroes live? We'll put a pin in that for another editorial.

But, with all this...why can't I stop thinking about Daredevil?

I keep asking myself: Why is there a man in a devil costume running around the shadows of Hell's Kitchen--even though I believe he is the only one that still calls it Hell's Kitchen? Why does every police blotter and eyewitness report that I have read about him seem go out of its way to point out Daredevil was "badly hurt" doing whatever he was doing?

Police and eyewitnesses all comment about the cuts and bruises and blood. If Daredevil has powers, they are certainly not in the Hulk/Thor/Thing category. He doesn't even seem close to the Spider-Man category. This very well may be an ordinary man dressed as the devil going out every night doing whatever he can to scare the crap out of the bad people so the good people can get a good night's sleep.

Why do I keep thinking about Daredevil?

Because I wish I was him.

This city is a mess. This country is a mess. We are more divided now than we thought possible. And with that comes insulation. People stop enjoying going out. People stop enjoying interaction. People stay home. People make their own entertainment. We cower in fear and start resenting each other for it.

Except people like this Daredevil.

He goes out and makes the world a better place, and he doesn't seem to have much to back it up. Nothing but sheer force of will.

I wish that instead of sitting here wondering if I locked all the doors, I had the courage to stand outside my house and guard my neighbors. I wish my next-door neighbor, a fellow I'm quite fond of, had the courage to guard me as well. I wish we all had each other's backs. I wish all of us had the desire to bleed a little bit for our fellow person's well-being.

Arguments about vigilantism will never go away. There have been those who will take the law into their own hands for as long as there has been man and law. I decided to abandon the argument and instead focus my attention on admiring those worth admiring.

I sometimes wonder how many times my life has been saved by people like Daredevil without my ever even knowing. According to Chief of Crime Control Strategies Richard Cheek, criminal activity in that area of the city is at a historic low. Thank you to the police, thank you to the FBI, the agents of S.H.I.E.L.D., the EMTs and security guards, but I think some of us might owe Daredevil more thanks than we think.

Until the streets are safe and the local authorities finally get this city under peaceful control, until we can stand together and protect each other...

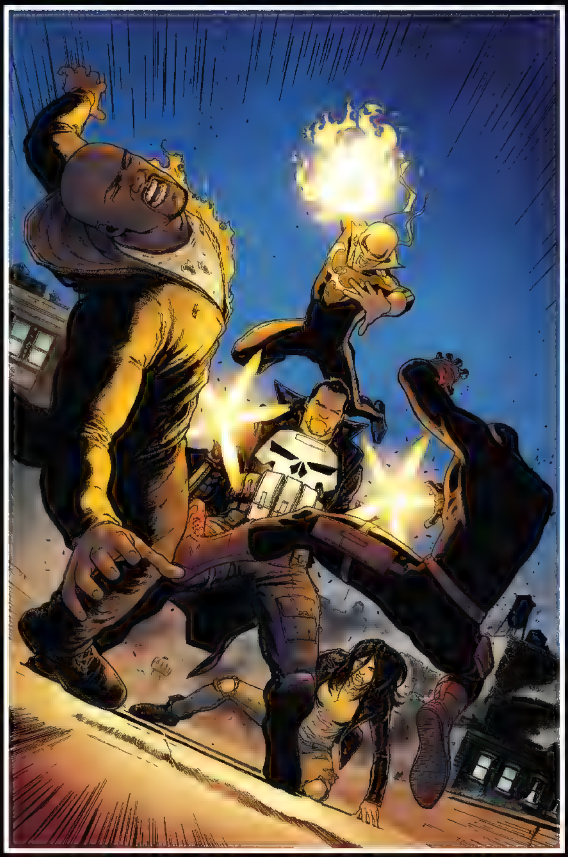
Thank you, Daredevil.

I wish I was you.

Follow *The Daily Bugle* Opinion section on Facebook and Twitter @DBUGLEopinion, and sign up for the DB Opinion Today newsletter.

A version of this editorial appears in print on April 20, on Page A22 of *The Daily Bugle*. Today's Paper | Subscribe

NEXT!



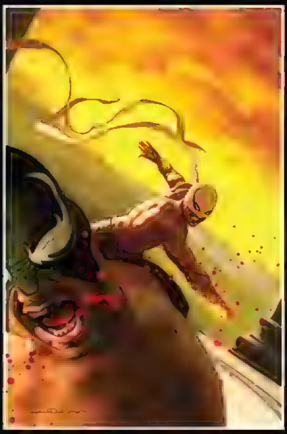
DEFENDERS #3

ALL ON SALE NEXT MONTH!

JESSICA JONES
#10

LUKE
CAGE
POWER MAN
GO
HOME

LUKE CAGE
#3

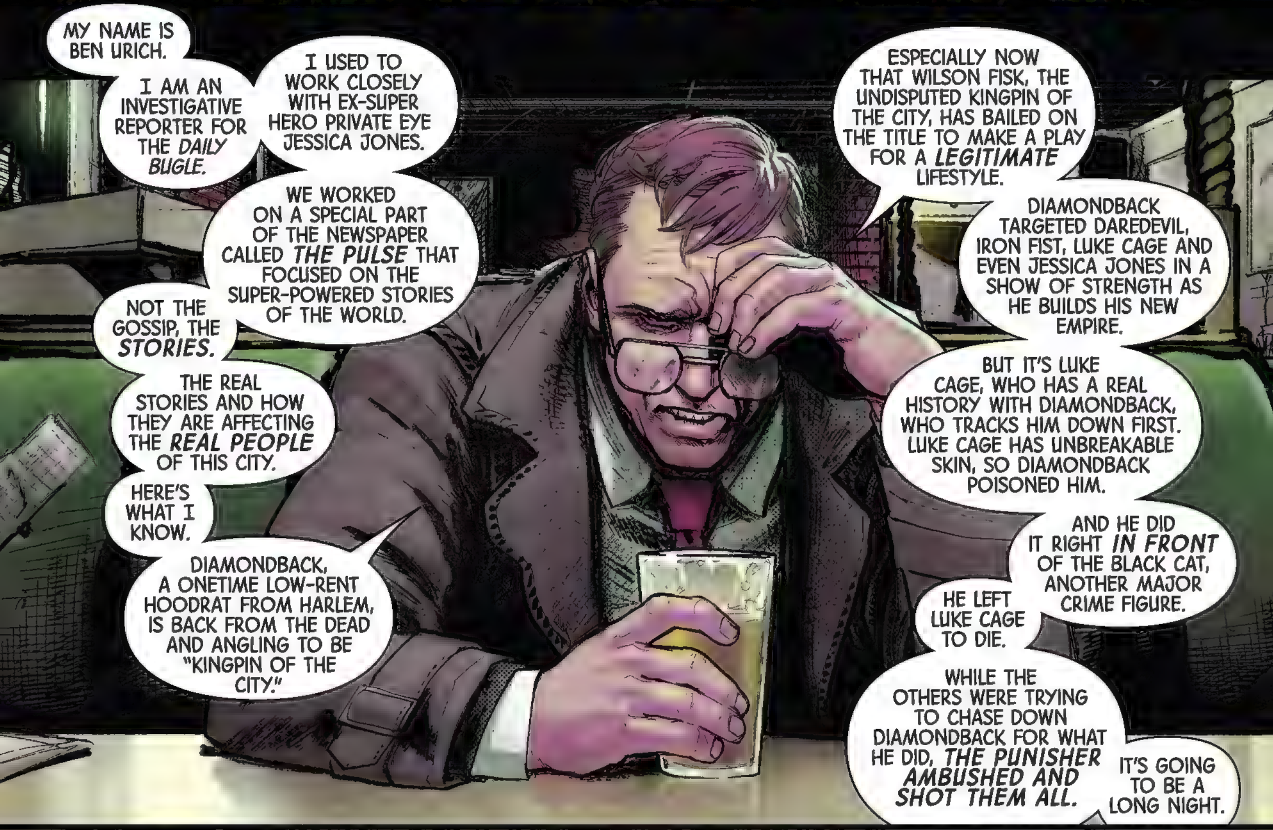


IRON FIST
#5

DAREDEVIL
#23

DAREDEVIL · LUKE CAGE · JESSICA JONES · IRON FIST
THE
DEFENDERS
MARVEL
#3
BENDIS
MARQUEZ
PONSOR

THE DEFENDERS


MY NAME IS BEN URICH.
I AM AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER FOR THE *DAILY BUGLE.*
I USED TO WORK CLOSELY WITH EX-SUPER HERO PRIVATE EYE JESSICA JONES.
WE WORKED ON A SPECIAL PART OF THE NEWSPAPER CALLED *THE PULSE* THAT FOCUSED ON THE SUPER-POWERED STORIES OF THE WORLD.
NOT THE GOSSIP, THE *STORIES.*
THE REAL STORIES AND HOW THEY ARE AFFECTING THE *REAL PEOPLE* OF THIS CITY.
HERE'S WHAT I KNOW.
DIAMONDBACK, A ONETIME LOW-RENT HOODRAT FROM HARLEM, IS BACK FROM THE DEAD AND ANGLING TO BE "KINGPIN OF THE CITY."
ESPECIALLY NOW THAT WILSON FISK, THE UNDISPUTED KINGPIN OF THE CITY, HAS BAILED ON THE TITLE TO MAKE A PLAY FOR A *LEGITIMATE* LIFESTYLE.
DIAMONDBACK TARGETED DAREDEVIL, IRON FIST, LUKE CAGE AND EVEN JESSICA JONES IN A SHOW OF STRENGTH AS HE BUILDS HIS NEW EMPIRE.
BUT IT'S LUKE CAGE, WHO HAS A REAL HISTORY WITH DIAMONDBACK, WHO TRACKS HIM DOWN FIRST. LUKE CAGE HAS UNBREAKABLE SKIN, SO DIAMONDBACK POISONED HIM.
AND HE DID IT RIGHT *IN FRONT* OF THE BLACK CAT, ANOTHER MAJOR CRIME FIGURE.
HE LEFT LUKE CAGE TO DIE.
WHILE THE OTHERS WERE TRYING TO CHASE DOWN DIAMONDBACK FOR WHAT HE DID, *THE PUNISHER AMBUSHED AND SHOT THEM ALL.*
IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG NIGHT.

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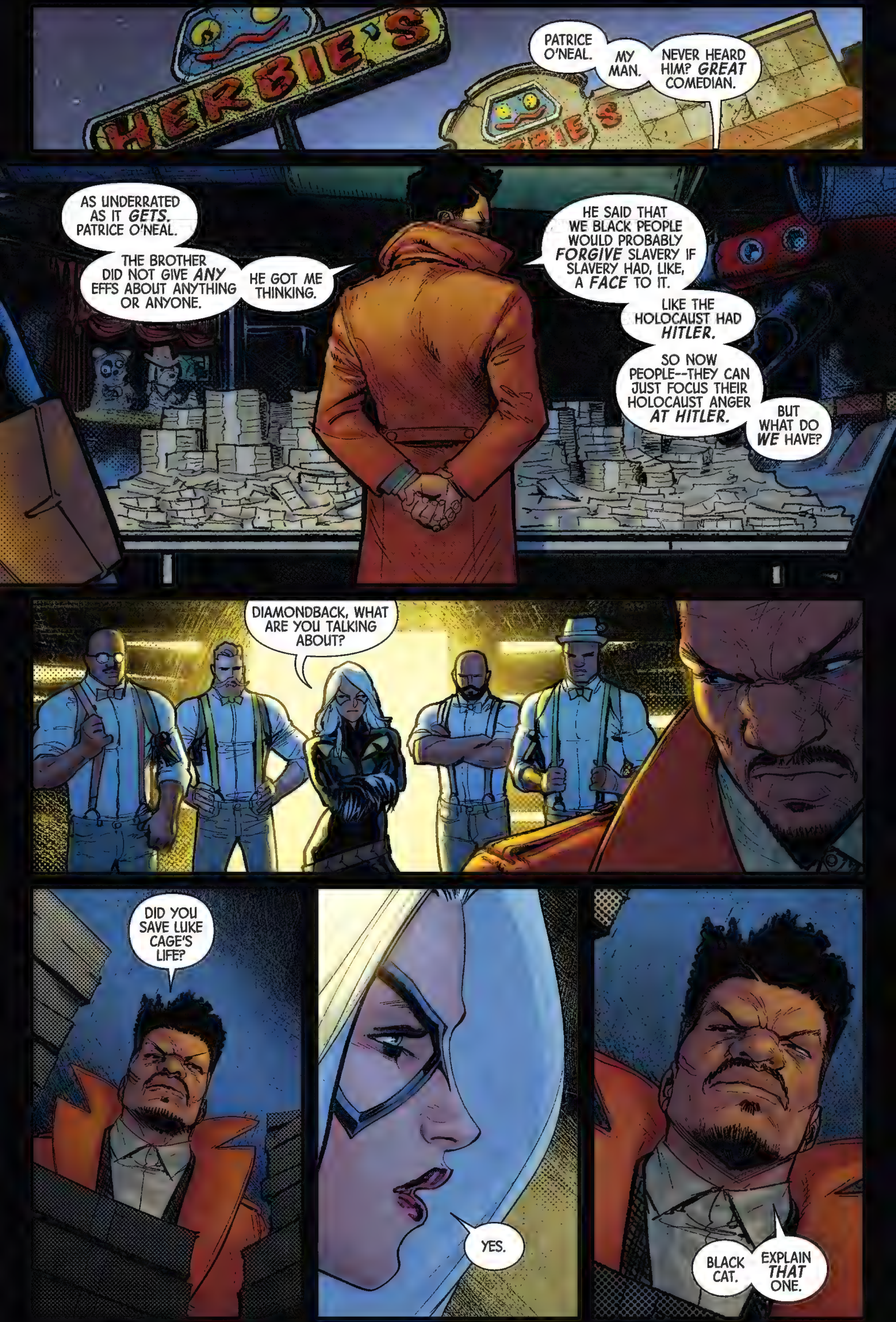
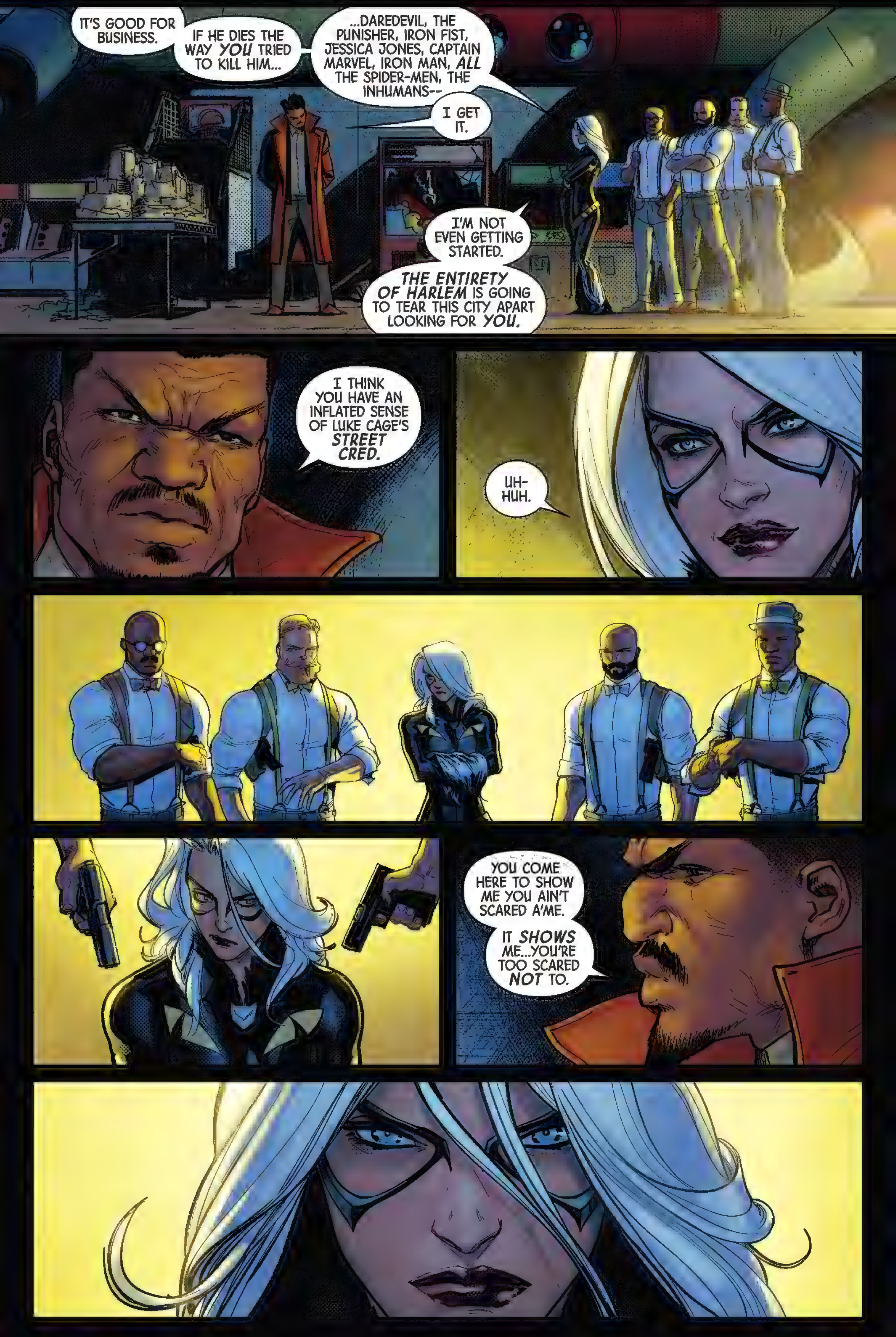
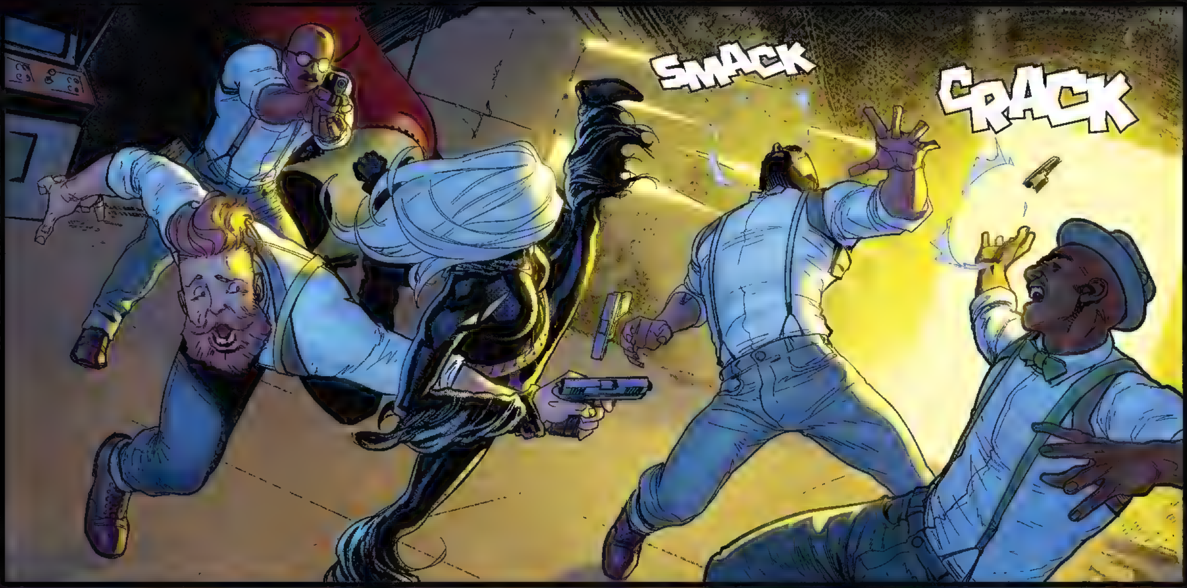
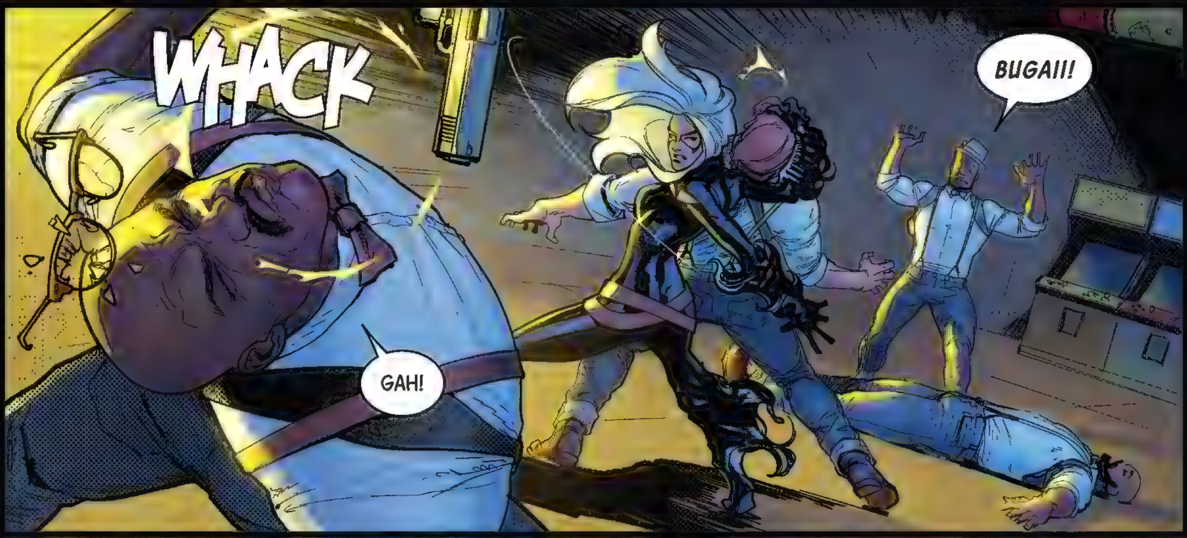
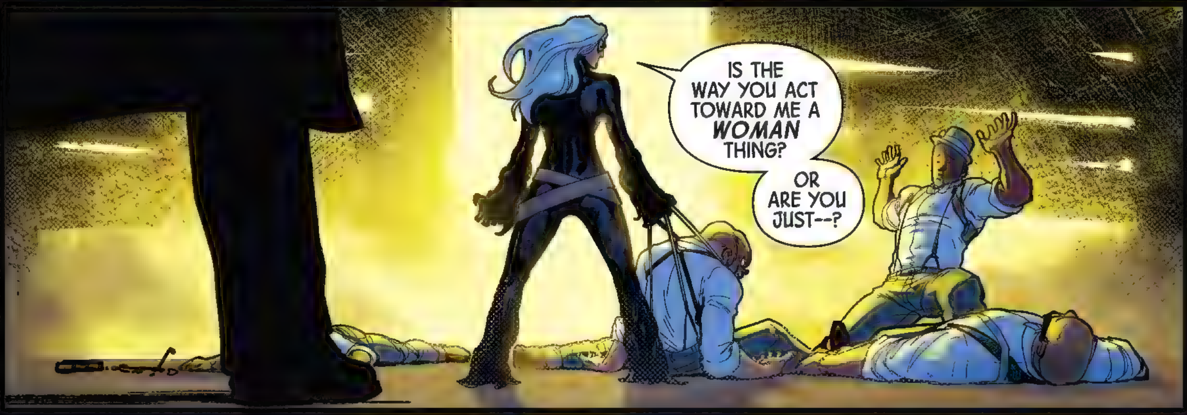
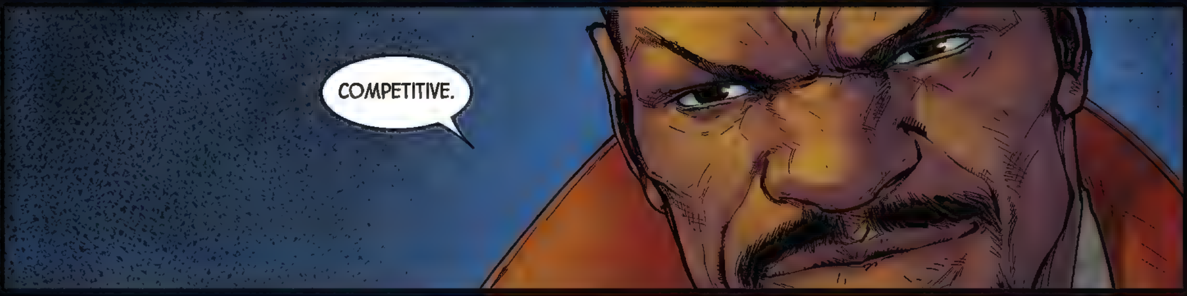

HERBIE'S
PATRICE O'NEAL.
MY MAN.
NEVER HEARD HIM? GREAT COMEDIAN.
AS UNDERRATED AS IT GETS. PATRICE O'NEAL.
THE BROTHER DID NOT GIVE ANY EFFS ABOUT ANYTHING OR ANYONE.
HE GOT ME THINKING.
HE SAID THAT WE BLACK PEOPLE WOULD PROBABLY FORGIVE SLAVERY IF SLAVERY HAD, LIKE, A FACE TO IT.
LIKE THE HOLOCAUST HAD HITLER.
SO NOW PEOPLE--THEY CAN JUST FOCUS THEIR HOLOCAUST ANGER AT HITLER.
BUT WHAT DO WE HAVE?
DIAMONDBACK, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
DID YOU SAVE LUKE CAGE'S LIFE?
YES.
BLACK CAT.
EXPLAIN THAT ONE.

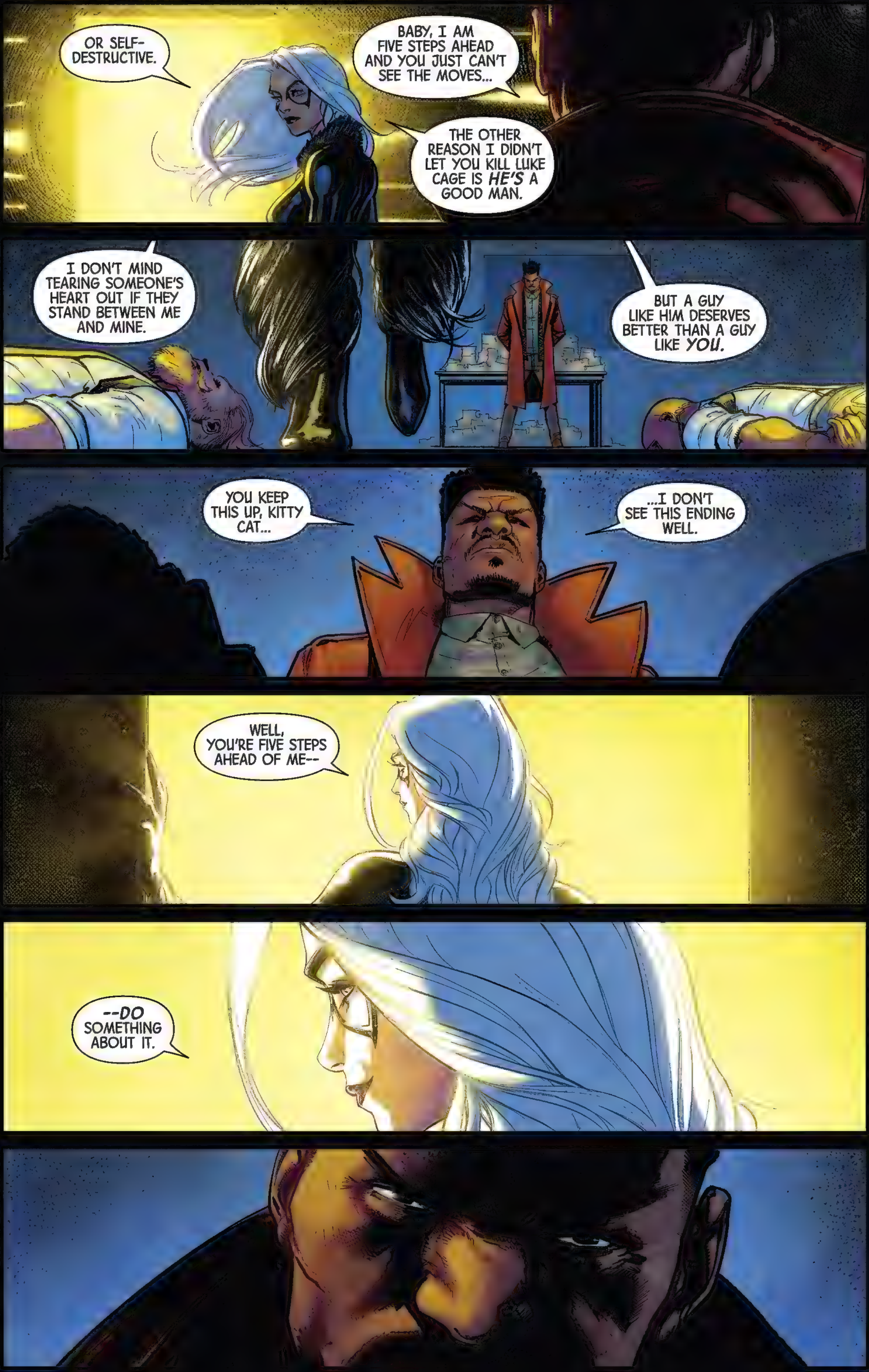

IT'S GOOD FOR BUSINESS.
IF HE DIES THE WAY *YOU* TRIED TO KILL HIM...
...DAREDEVIL, THE PUNISHER, IRON FIST, JESSICA JONES, CAPTAIN MARVEL, IRON MAN, *ALL* THE SPIDER-MEN, THE INHUMANS--
I GET IT.
I'M NOT EVEN GETTING STARTED.
THE ENTIRETY OF HARLEM IS GOING TO TEAR THIS CITY APART LOOKING FOR *YOU.*
I THINK YOU HAVE AN INFLATED SENSE OF LUKE CAGE'S *STREET CRED.*
UH-HUH.
YOU COME HERE TO SHOW ME YOU AIN'T SCARED A'ME.
IT *SHOWS* ME...YOU'RE TOO SCARED *NOT* TO.

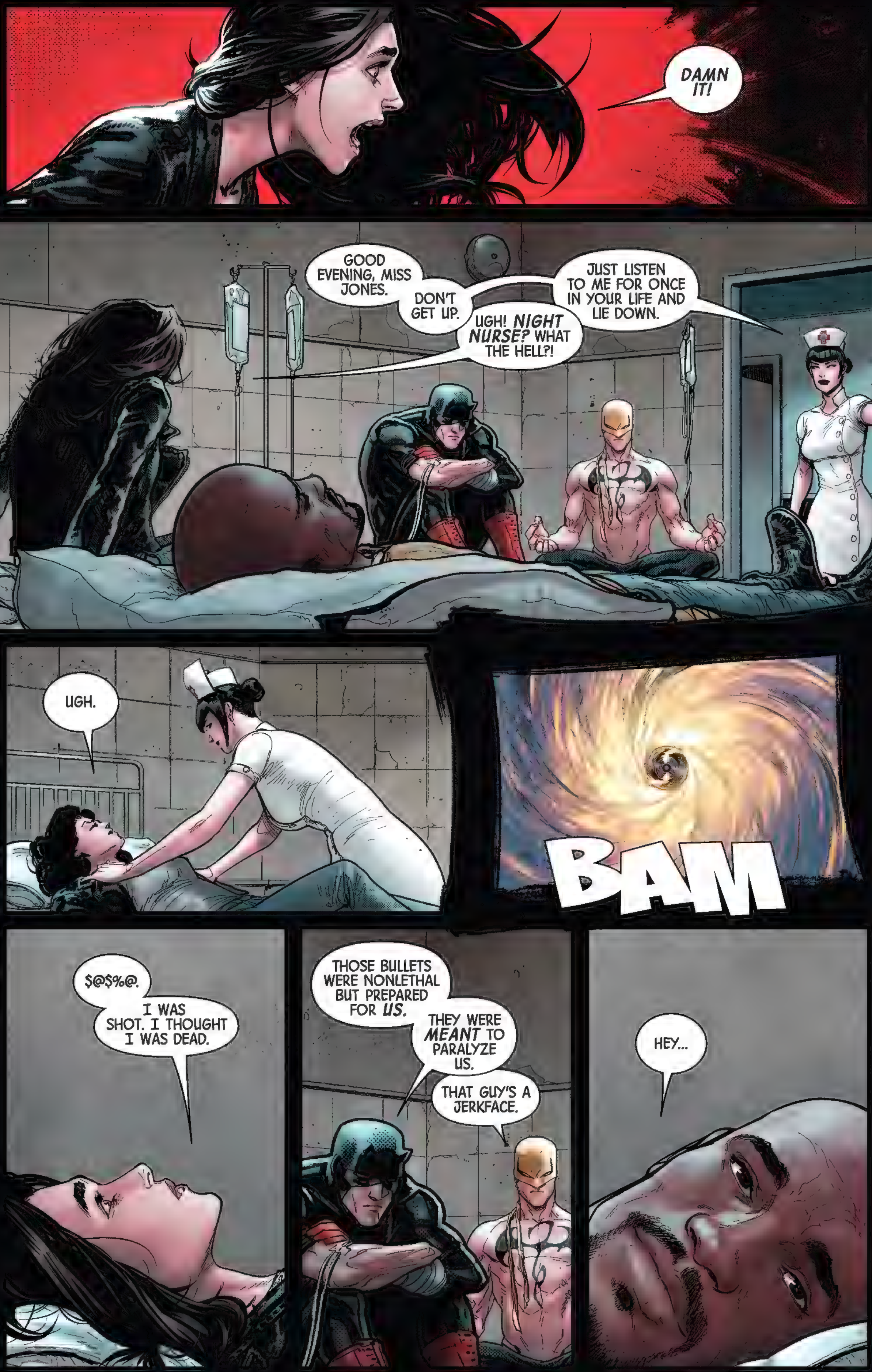

SMACK
CRACK

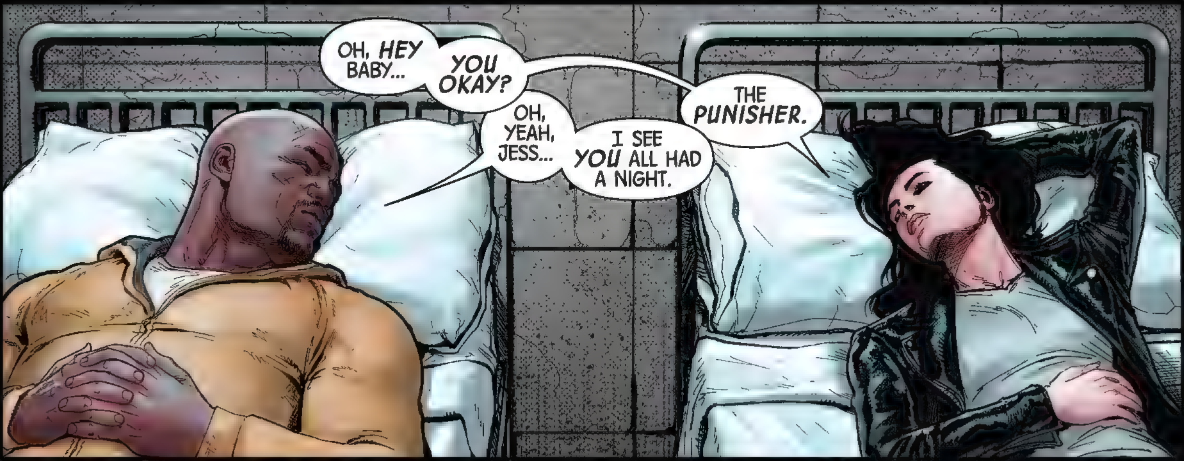

WHACK
GAH!
BUGAII!

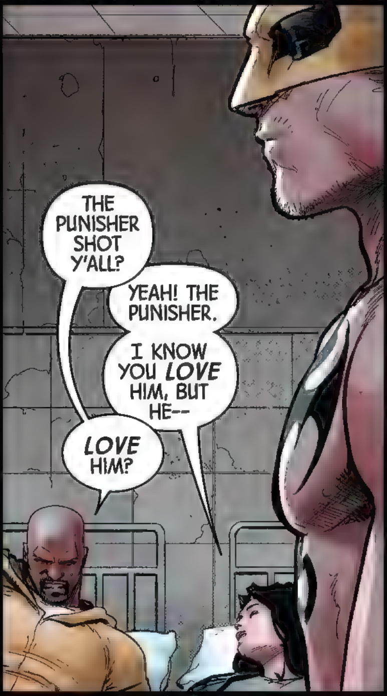

IS THE WAY YOU ACT TOWARD ME A *WOMAN* THING?
OR ARE YOU JUST--?

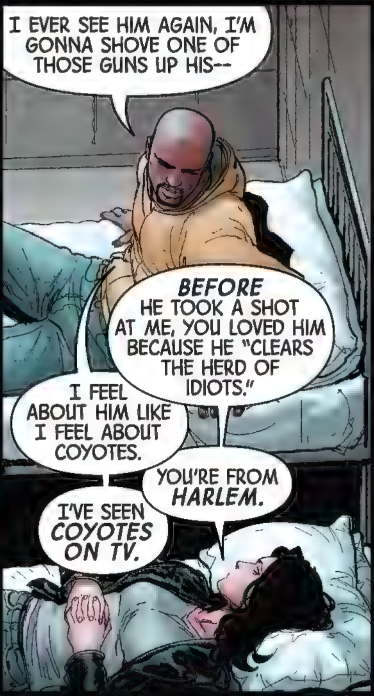

COMPETITIVE.

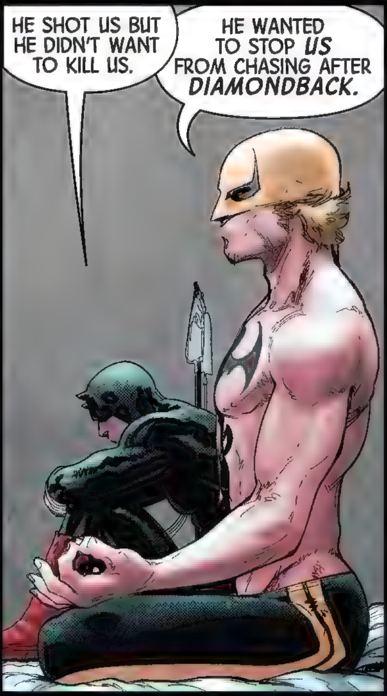

OR SELF-DESTRUCTIVE.
BABY, I AM FIVE STEPS AHEAD AND YOU JUST CAN'T SEE THE MOVES...
THE OTHER REASON I DIDN'T LET YOU KILL LUKE CAGE IS *HE'S* A GOOD MAN.
I DON'T MIND TEARING SOMEONE'S HEART OUT IF THEY STAND BETWEEN ME AND MINE.
BUT A GUY LIKE HIM DESERVES BETTER THAN A GUY LIKE *YOU.*
YOU KEEP THIS UP, KITTY CAT...
...I DON'T SEE THIS ENDING WELL.
WELL, YOU'RE FIVE STEPS AHEAD OF ME--
--*DO* SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

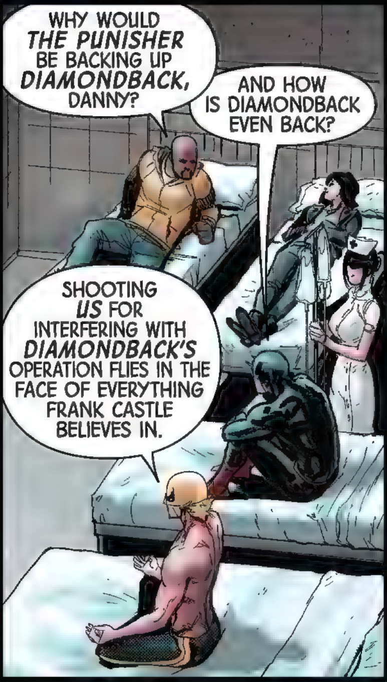

DAMN IT!
GOOD EVENING, MISS JONES.
DON'T GET UP.
JUST LISTEN TO ME FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE AND LIE DOWN.
UGH! *NIGHT NURSE?* WHAT THE HELL?!
UGH.
BAM
$@$%@.
I WAS SHOT. I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD.
THOSE BULLETS WERE NONLETHAL BUT PREPARED FOR *US.*
THEY WERE *MEANT* TO PARALYZE US.
THAT GUY'S A JERKFACE.
HEY...

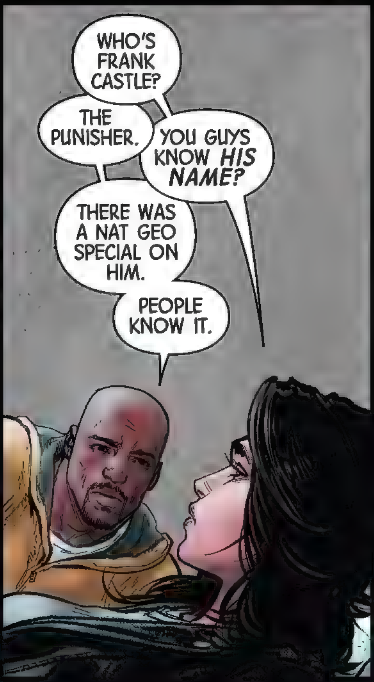

OH, HEY BABY... YOU OKAY?
OH, YEAH, JESS...
I SEE YOU ALL HAD A NIGHT.
THE PUNISHER.

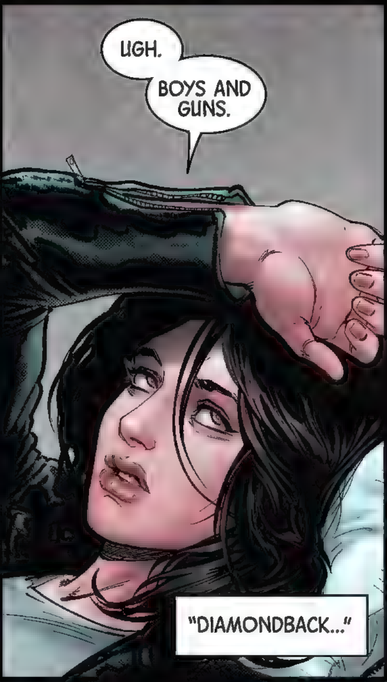

THE PUNISHER SHOT Y'ALL?
YEAH! THE PUNISHER.
I KNOW YOU LOVE HIM, BUT HE--
LOVE HIM?

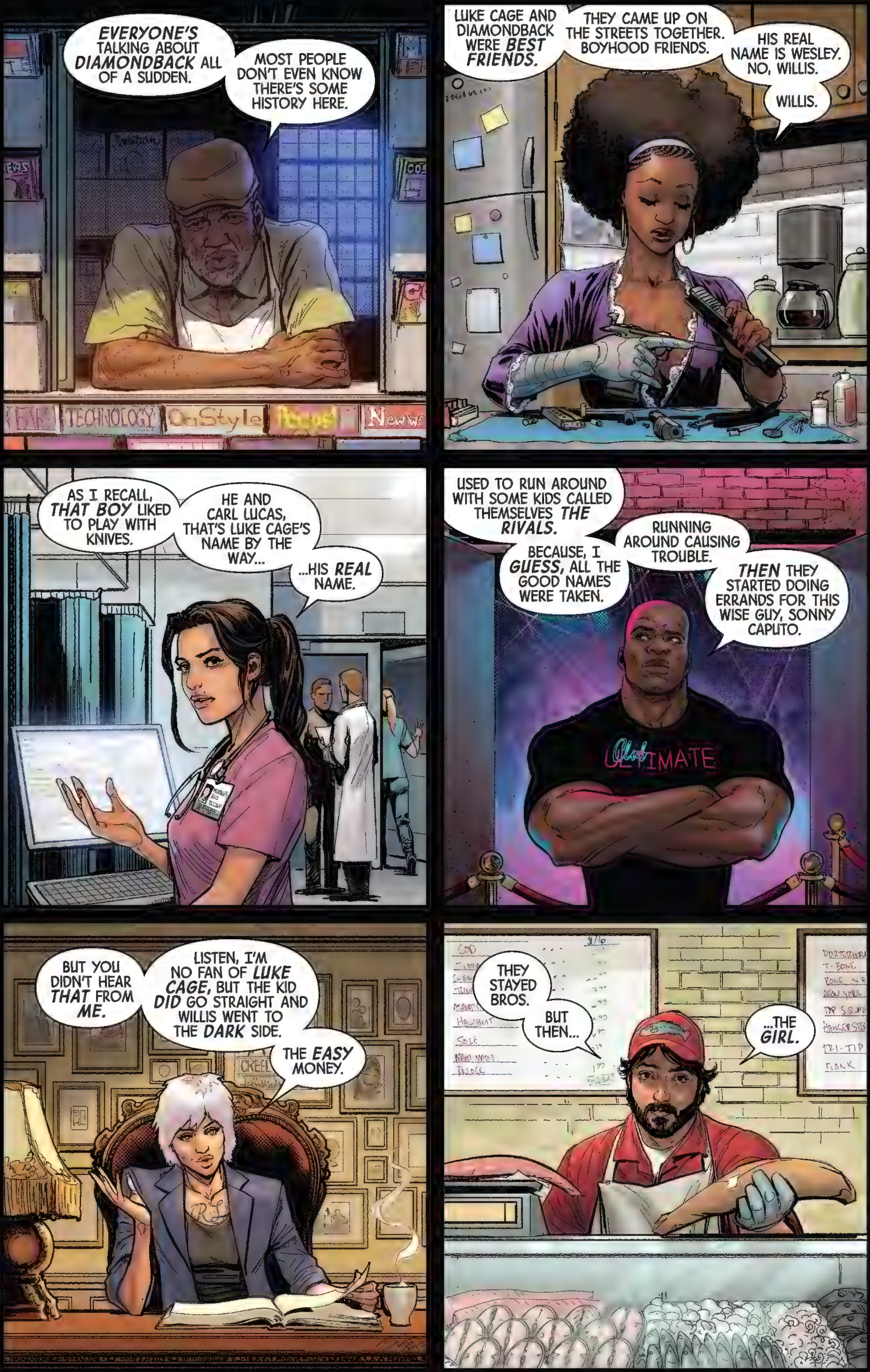

I EVER SEE HIM AGAIN, I'M GONNA SHOVE ONE OF THOSE GUNS UP HIS--
BEFORE HE TOOK A SHOT AT ME, YOU LOVED HIM BECAUSE HE "CLEARS THE HERD OF IDIOTS."
I FEEL ABOUT HIM LIKE I FEEL ABOUT COYOTES.
YOU'RE FROM HARLEM.
I'VE SEEN COYOTES ON TV.

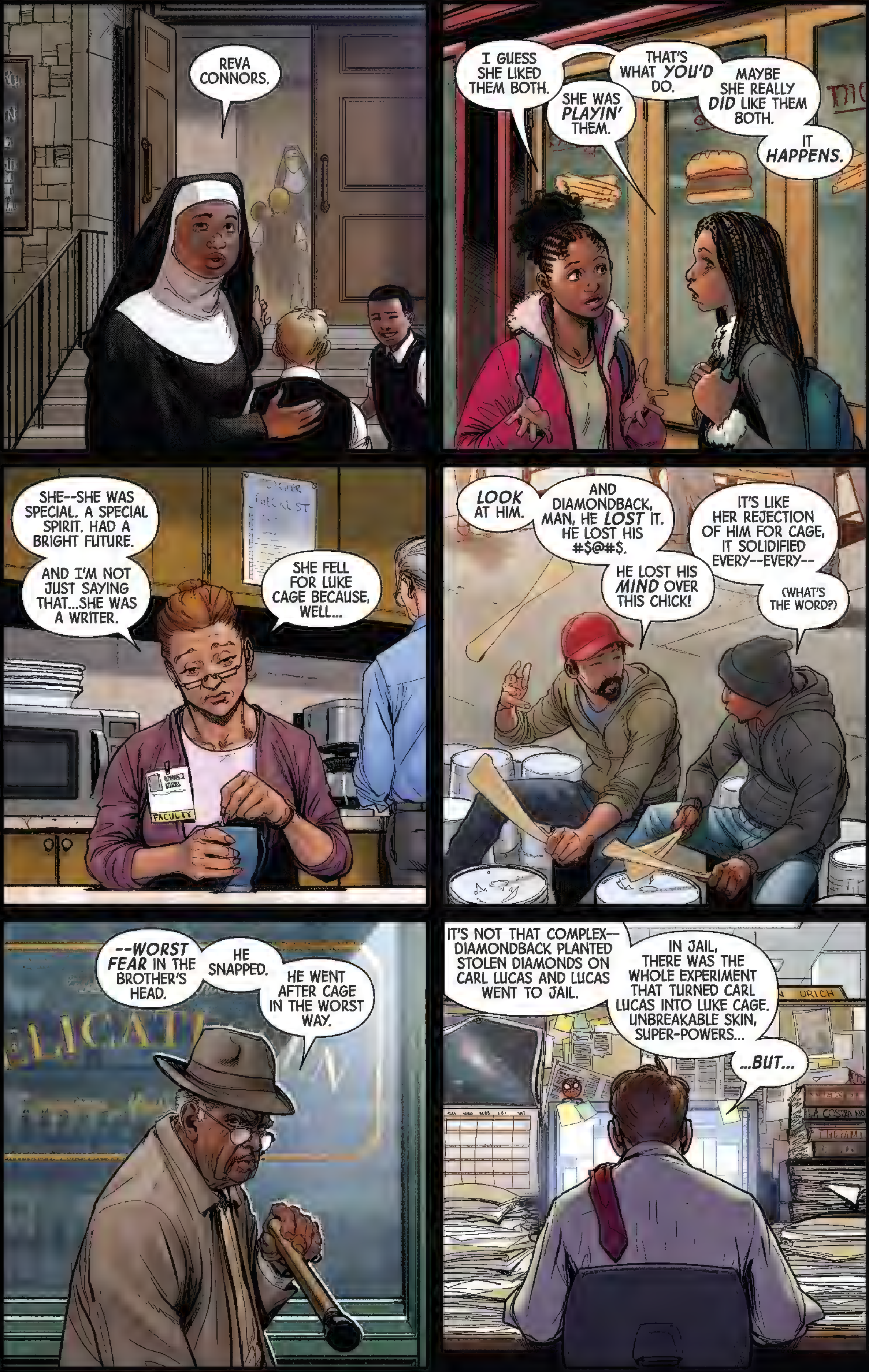

HE SHOT US BUT HE DIDN'T WANT TO KILL US.
HE WANTED TO STOP US FROM CHASING AFTER DIAMONDBACK.

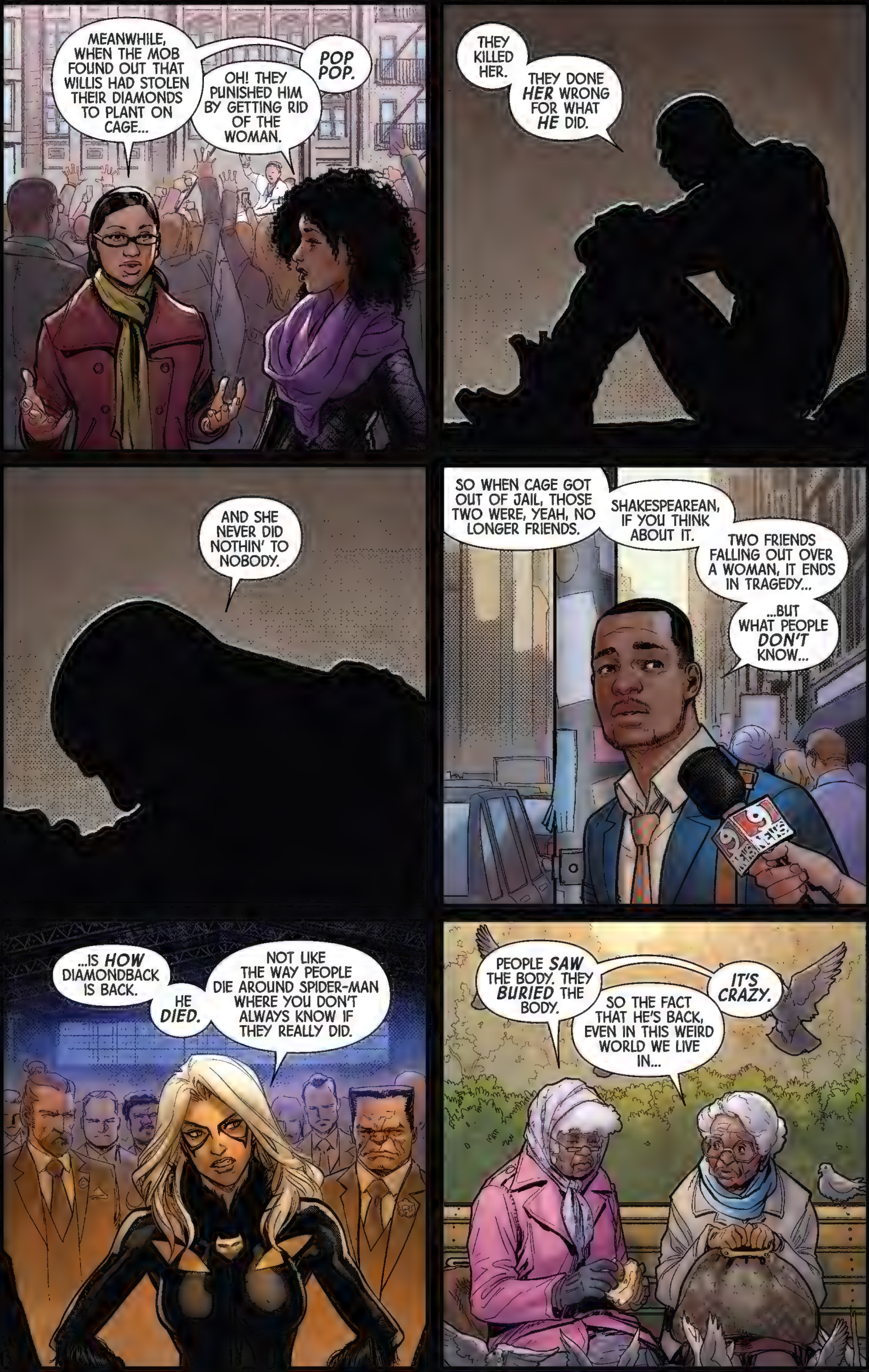

WHY WOULD THE PUNISHER BE BACKING UP DIAMONDBACK, DANNY?
AND HOW IS DIAMONDBACK EVEN BACK?
SHOOTING US FOR INTERFERING WITH DIAMONDBACK'S OPERATION FLIES IN THE FACE OF EVERYTHING FRANK CASTLE BELIEVES IN.

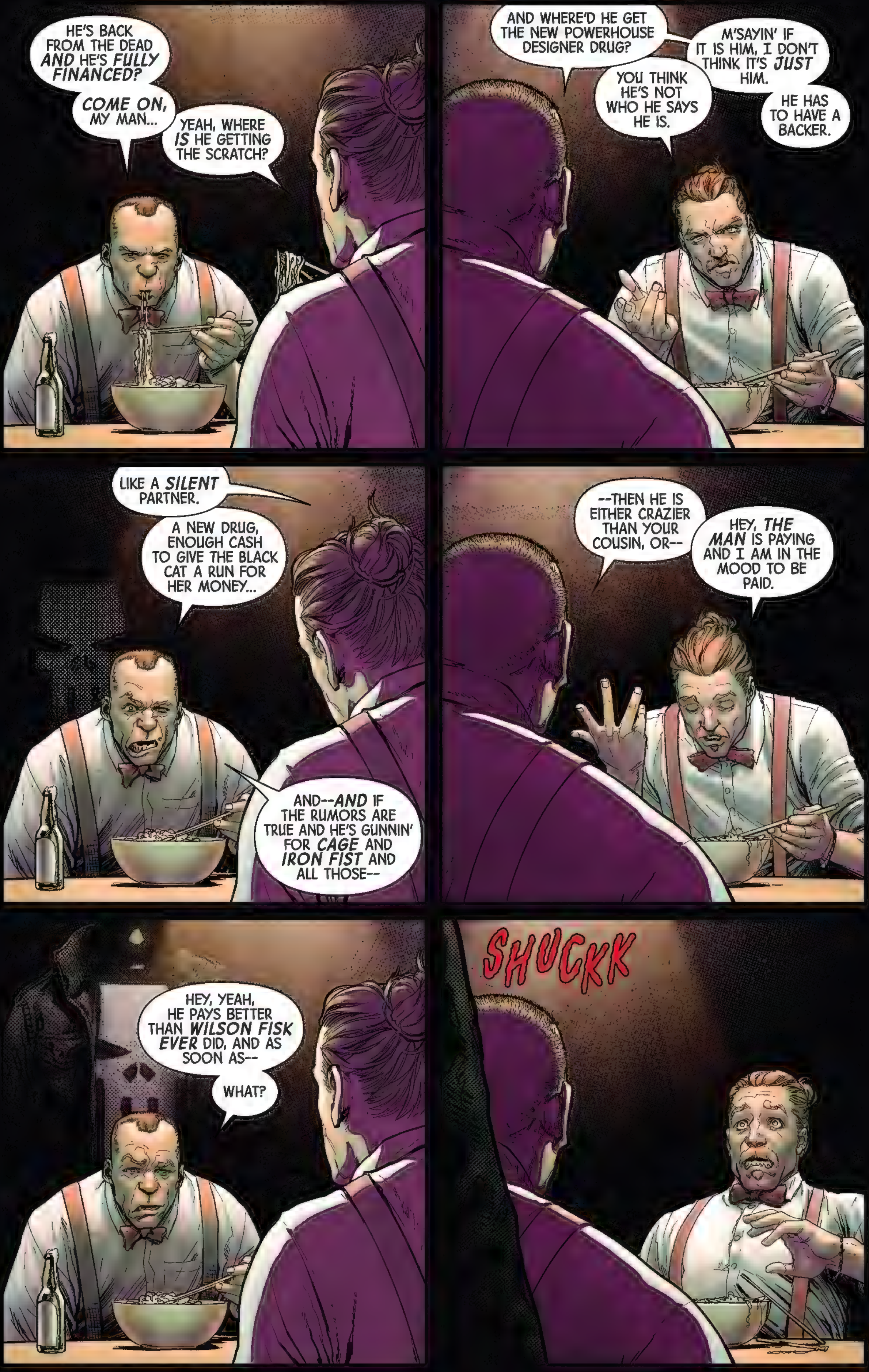

WHO'S FRANK CASTLE?
THE PUNISHER.
YOU GUYS KNOW HIS NAME?
THERE WAS A NAT GEO SPECIAL ON HIM.
PEOPLE KNOW IT.

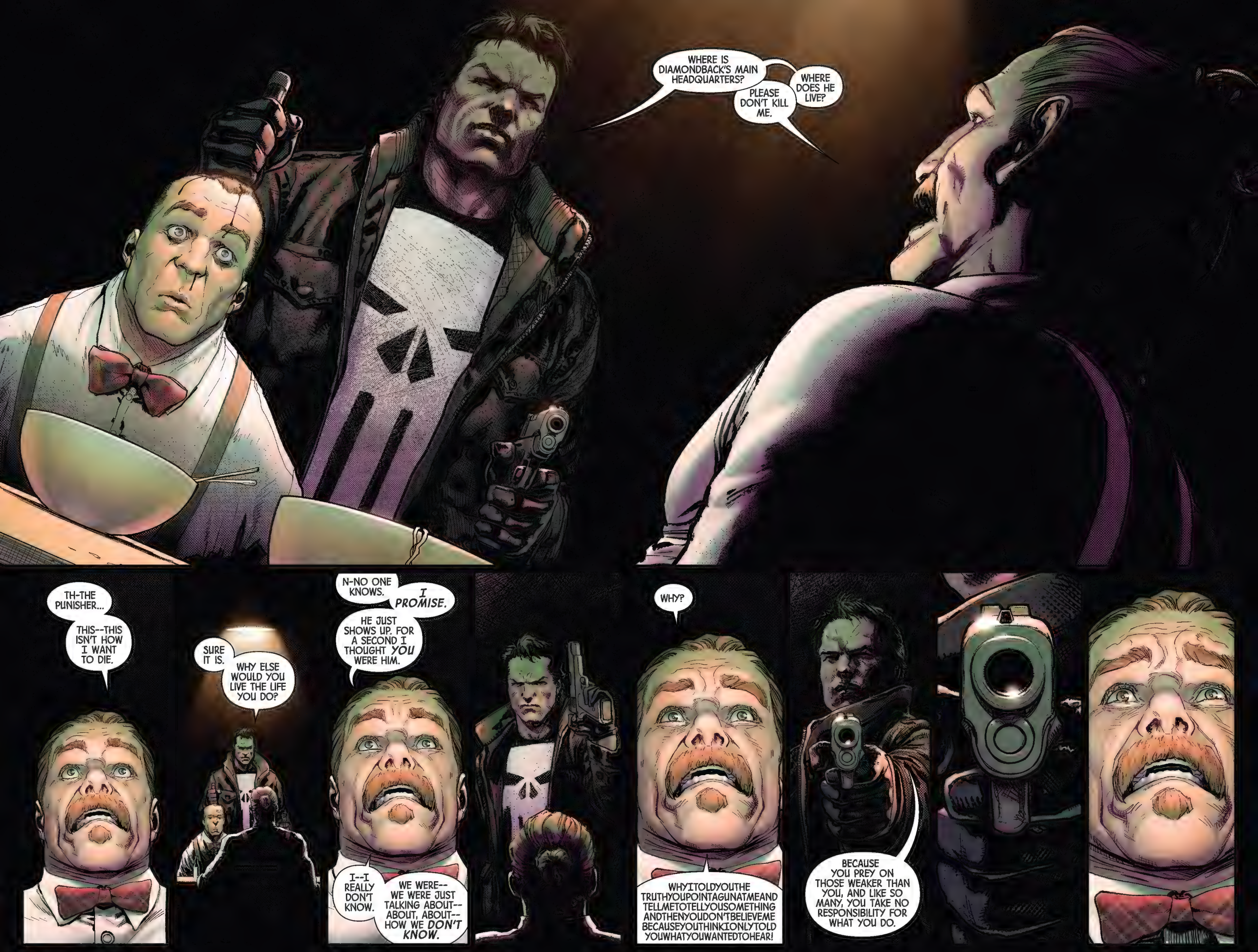

UGH.
BOYS AND GUNS.
"DIAMONDBACK..."

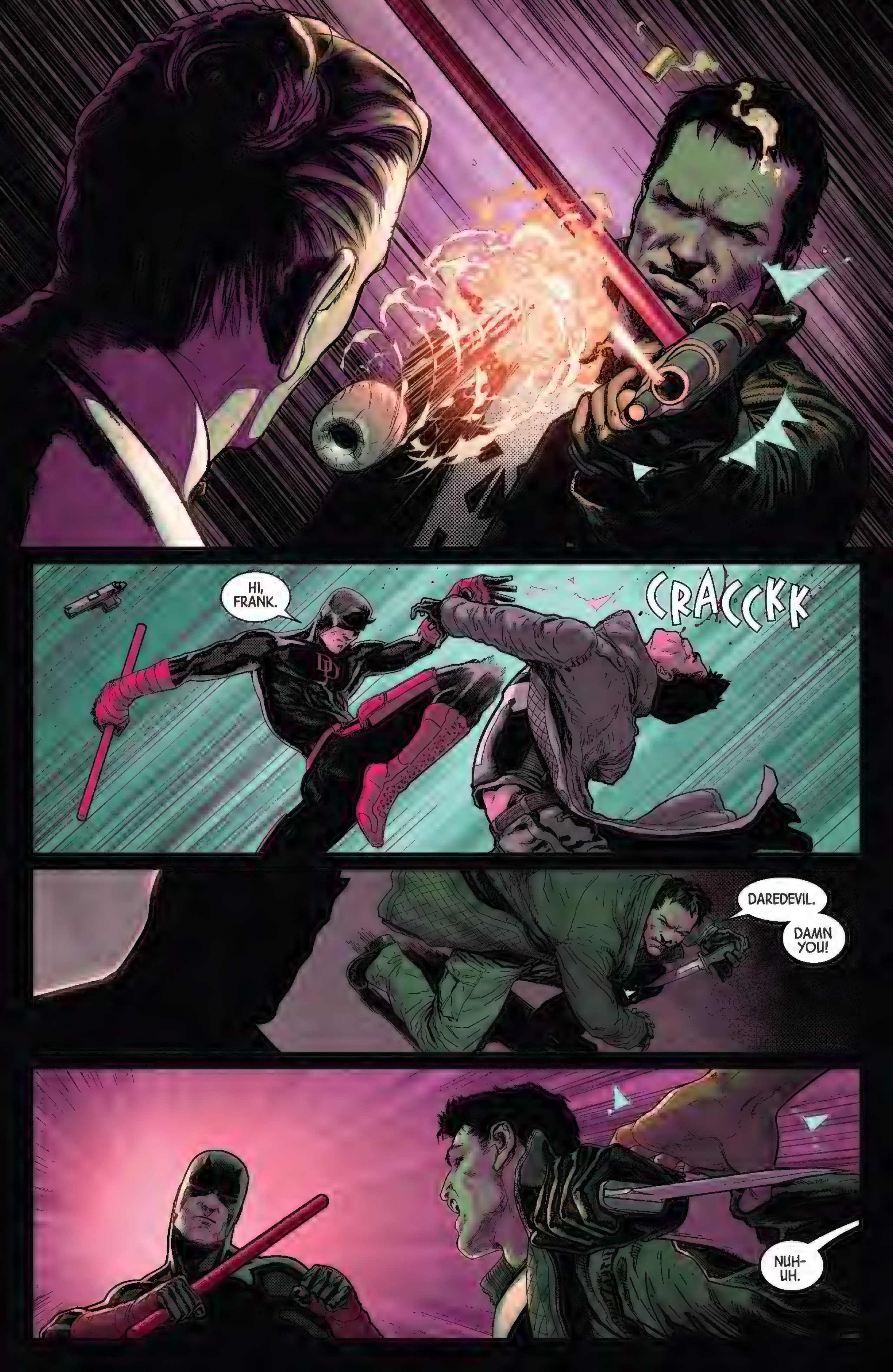

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT DIAMONDBACK ALL OF A SUDDEN.
MOST PEOPLE DON'T EVEN KNOW THERE'S SOME HISTORY HERE.
TECHNOLOGY
OnStyle
LUKE CAGE AND DIAMONDBACK WERE BEST FRIENDS.
THEY CAME UP ON THE STREETS TOGETHER. BOYHOOD FRIENDS.
HIS REAL NAME IS WESLEY. NO, WILLIS.
WILLIS.
AS I RECALL, THAT BOY LIKED TO PLAY WITH KNIVES.
HE AND CARL LUCAS, THAT'S LUKE CAGE'S NAME BY THE WAY...
...HIS REAL NAME.
USED TO RUN AROUND WITH SOME KIDS CALLED THEMSELVES THE RIVALS.
BECAUSE, I GUESS, ALL THE GOOD NAMES WERE TAKEN.
RUNNING AROUND CAUSING TROUBLE.
THEN THEY STARTED DOING ERRANDS FOR THIS WISE GUY, SONNY CAPUTO.
ULTIMATE
BUT YOU DIDN'T HEAR THAT FROM ME.
LISTEN, I'M NO FAN OF LUKE CAGE, BUT THE KID DID GO STRAIGHT AND WILLIS WENT TO THE DARK SIDE.
THE EASY MONEY.
THEY STAYED BROS.
BUT THEN...
...THE GIRL.

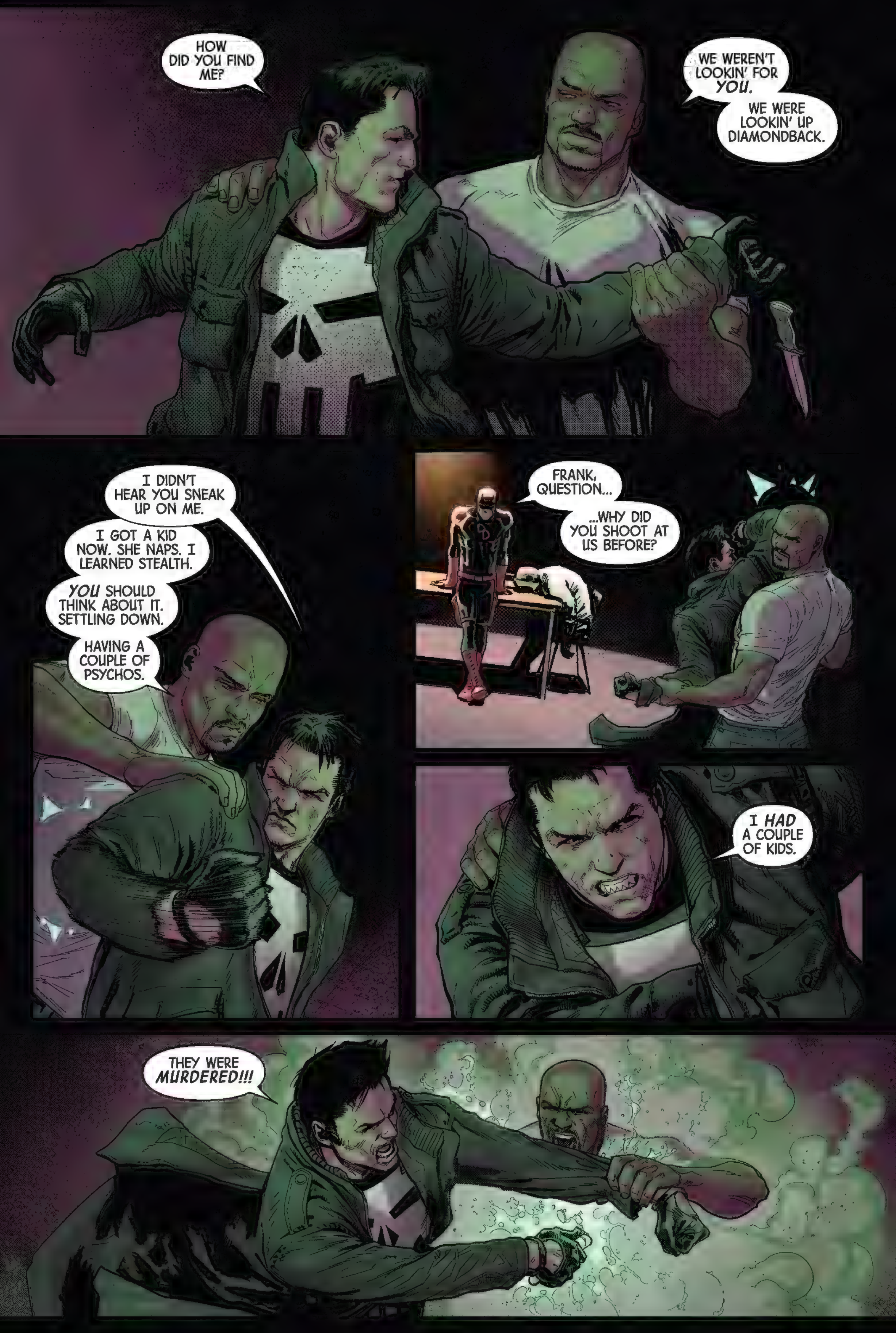

REVA CONNORS.
I GUESS SHE LIKED THEM BOTH.
THAT'S WHAT *YOU'D* DO.
SHE WAS *PLAYIN'* THEM.
MAYBE SHE REALLY *DID* LIKE THEM BOTH.
IT *HAPPENS.*
SHE--SHE WAS SPECIAL. A SPECIAL SPIRIT. HAD A BRIGHT FUTURE.
AND I'M NOT JUST SAYING THAT...SHE WAS A WRITER.
SHE FELL FOR LUKE CAGE BECAUSE, WELL...
FACULTY
LOOK AT HIM.
AND DIAMONDBACK, MAN, HE *LOST* IT. HE LOST HIS #$@#$.
HE LOST HIS *MIND* OVER THIS CHICK!
IT'S LIKE HER REJECTION OF HIM FOR CAGE, IT SOLIDIFIED EVERY--EVERY--
(WHAT'S THE WORD?)
--*WORST FEAR* IN THE BROTHER'S HEAD.
HE SNAPPED.
HE WENT AFTER CAGE IN THE WORST WAY.
IT'S NOT THAT COMPLEX--DIAMONDBACK PLANTED STOLEN DIAMONDS ON CARL LUCAS AND LUCAS WENT TO JAIL.
IN JAIL, THERE WAS THE WHOLE EXPERIMENT THAT TURNED CARL LUCAS INTO LUKE CAGE. UNBREAKABLE SKIN, SUPER-POWERS...
...*BUT*...
URICH

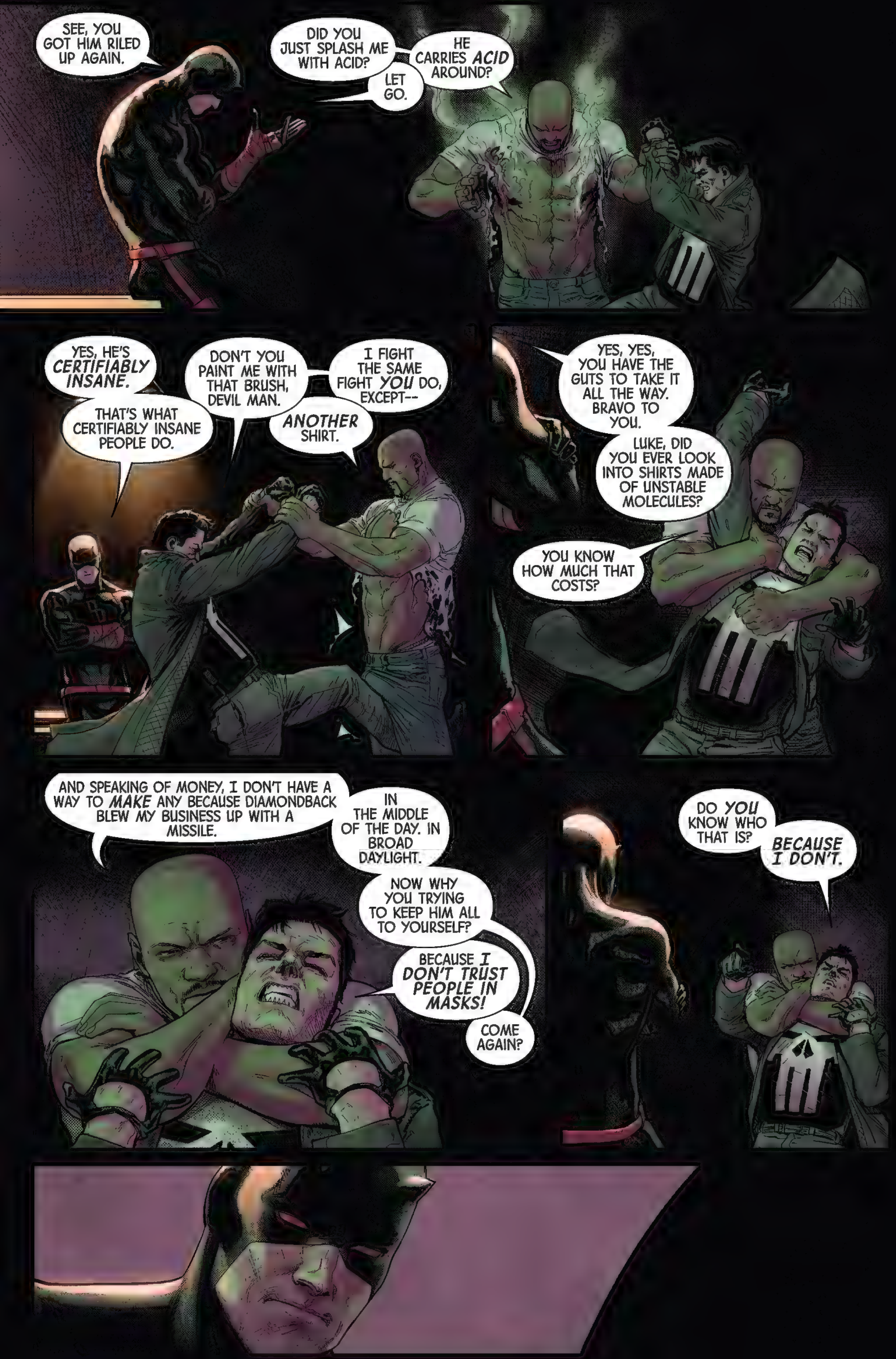

MEANWHILE, WHEN THE MOB FOUND OUT THAT WILLIS HAD STOLEN THEIR DIAMONDS TO PLANT ON CAGE...
POP POP.
OH! THEY PUNISHED HIM BY GETTING RID OF THE WOMAN.
THEY KILLED HER.
THEY DONE *HER* WRONG FOR WHAT *HE* DID.
AND SHE NEVER DID NOTHIN' TO NOBODY.
SO WHEN CAGE GOT OUT OF JAIL, THOSE TWO WERE, YEAH, NO LONGER FRIENDS.
SHAKESPEAREAN, IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT.
TWO FRIENDS FALLING OUT OVER A WOMAN, IT ENDS IN TRAGEDY...
...BUT WHAT PEOPLE *DON'T* KNOW...
9 NEWS
...IS *HOW* DIAMONDBACK IS BACK.
HE *DIED.*
NOT LIKE THE WAY PEOPLE DIE AROUND SPIDER-MAN WHERE YOU DON'T ALWAYS KNOW IF THEY REALLY DID.
PEOPLE *SAW* THE BODY. THEY *BURIED* THE BODY.
IT'S CRAZY.
SO THE FACT THAT HE'S BACK, EVEN IN THIS WEIRD WORLD WE LIVE IN...

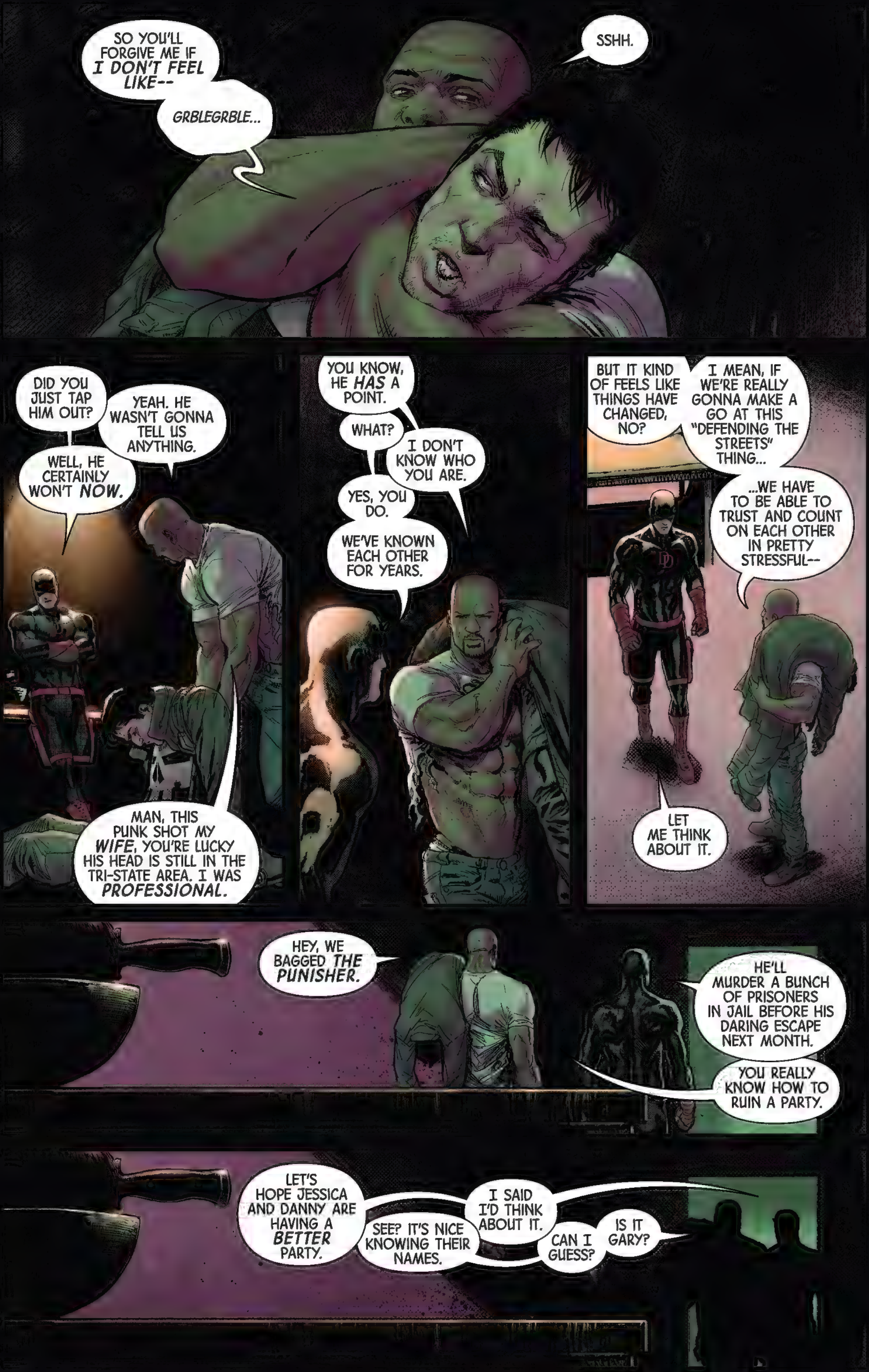

HE'S BACK FROM THE DEAD *AND* HE'S *FULLY FINANCED?*
COME ON, MY MAN...
YEAH, WHERE *IS* HE GETTING THE SCRATCH?
AND WHERE'D HE GET THE NEW POWERHOUSE DESIGNER DRUG?
YOU THINK HE'S NOT WHO HE SAYS HE IS.
M'SAYIN' IF IT IS HIM, I DON'T THINK IT'S *JUST* HIM.
HE HAS TO HAVE A BACKER.
LIKE A *SILENT* PARTNER.
A NEW DRUG, ENOUGH CASH TO GIVE THE BLACK CAT A RUN FOR HER MONEY...
AND--*AND* IF THE RUMORS ARE TRUE AND HE'S GUNNIN' FOR *CAGE* AND *IRON FIST* AND ALL THOSE--
--THEN HE IS EITHER CRAZIER THAN YOUR COUSIN, OR--
HEY, *THE MAN* IS PAYING AND I AM IN THE MOOD TO BE PAID.
HEY, YEAH, HE PAYS BETTER THAN *WILSON FISK EVER* DID, AND AS SOON AS--
WHAT?
SHUCKK

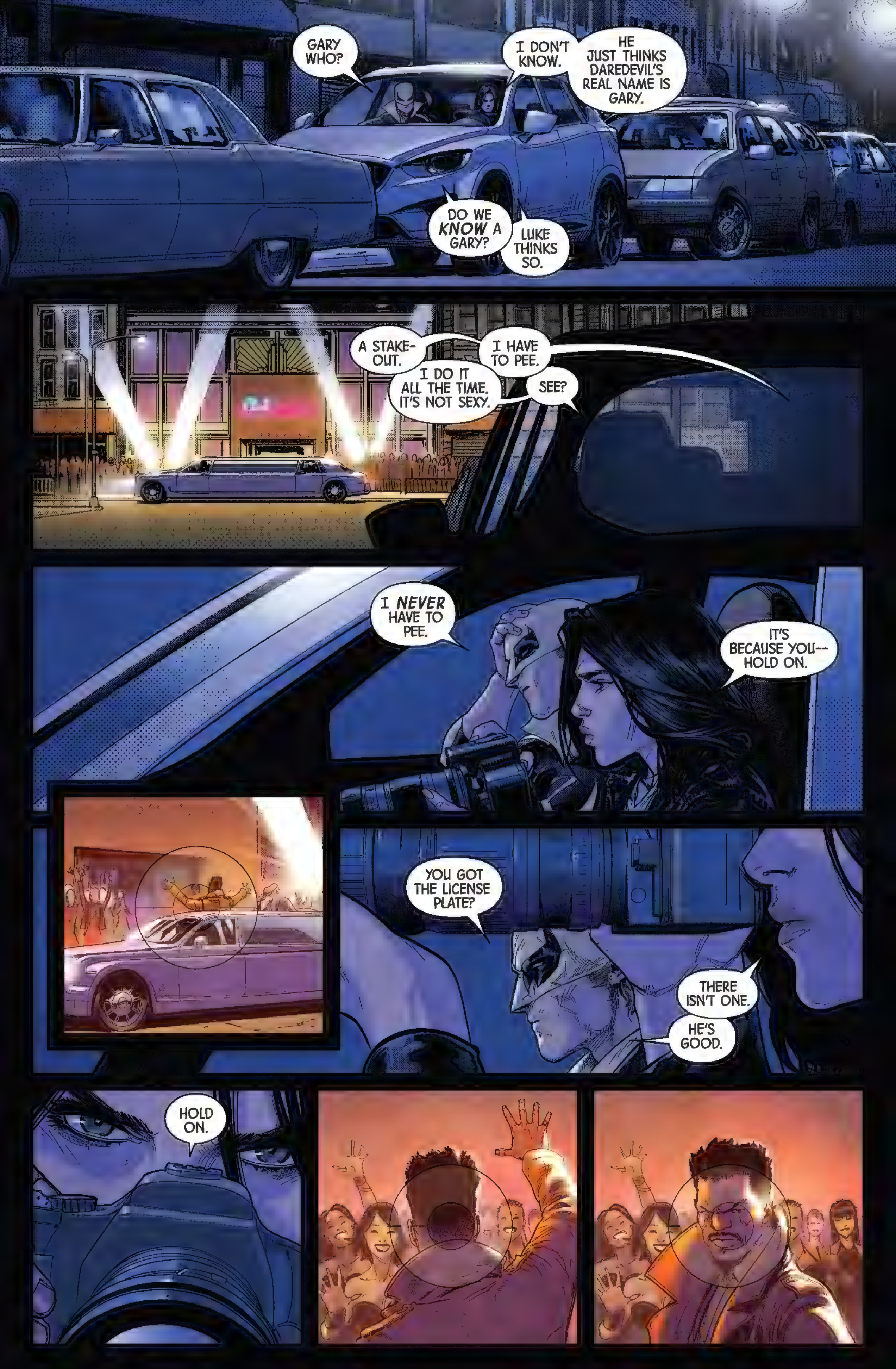

WHERE IS DIAMONDBACK'S MAIN HEADQUARTERS?
PLEASE DON'T KILL ME.
WHERE DOES HE LIVE?
TH-THE PUNISHER...
THIS--THIS ISN'T HOW I WANT TO DIE.
SURE IT IS.
WHY ELSE WOULD YOU LIVE THE LIFE YOU DO?
N-NO ONE KNOWS.
I PROMISE.
HE JUST SHOWS UP. FOR A SECOND I THOUGHT *YOU* WERE HIM.
I--I REALLY DON'T KNOW.
WE WERE-- WE WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT-- ABOUT, ABOUT-- HOW WE *DON'T KNOW.*
WHY?
WHYITOLDYOUTHE TRUTHYOUPOINTAGUNATMEAND TELLMETOTELLYOUSOMETHING ANDTHENYOUDON'TBELIEVEME BECAUSEYOUTHINKIONLYTOLD YOUWHATYOUWANTEDTOHEAR!
BECAUSE YOU PREY ON THOSE WEAKER THAN YOU, AND LIKE SO MANY, YOU TAKE NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT YOU DO.

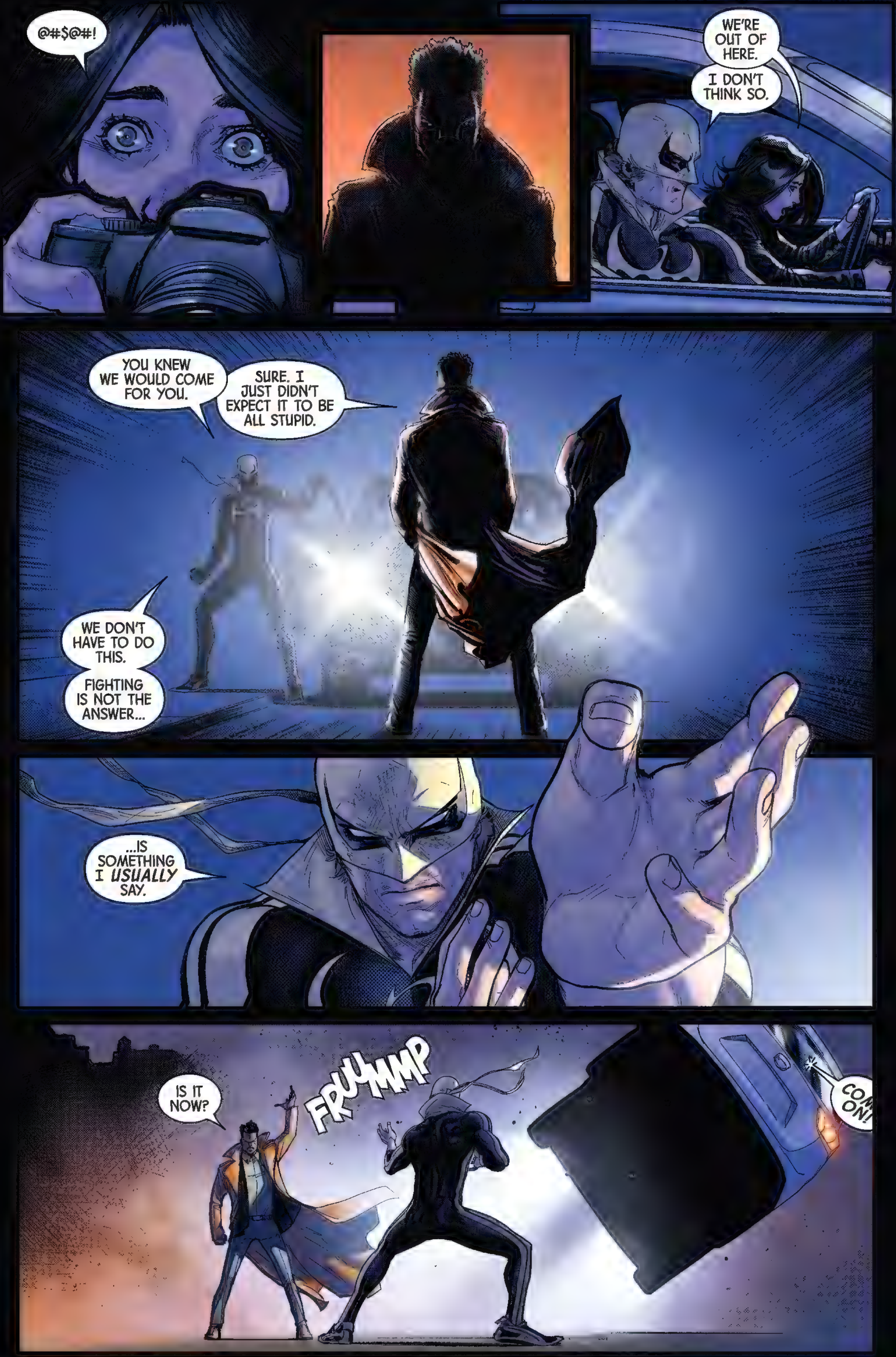

HI, FRANK.
CRACCKK
DAREDEVIL.
DAMN YOU!
NUH-UH.

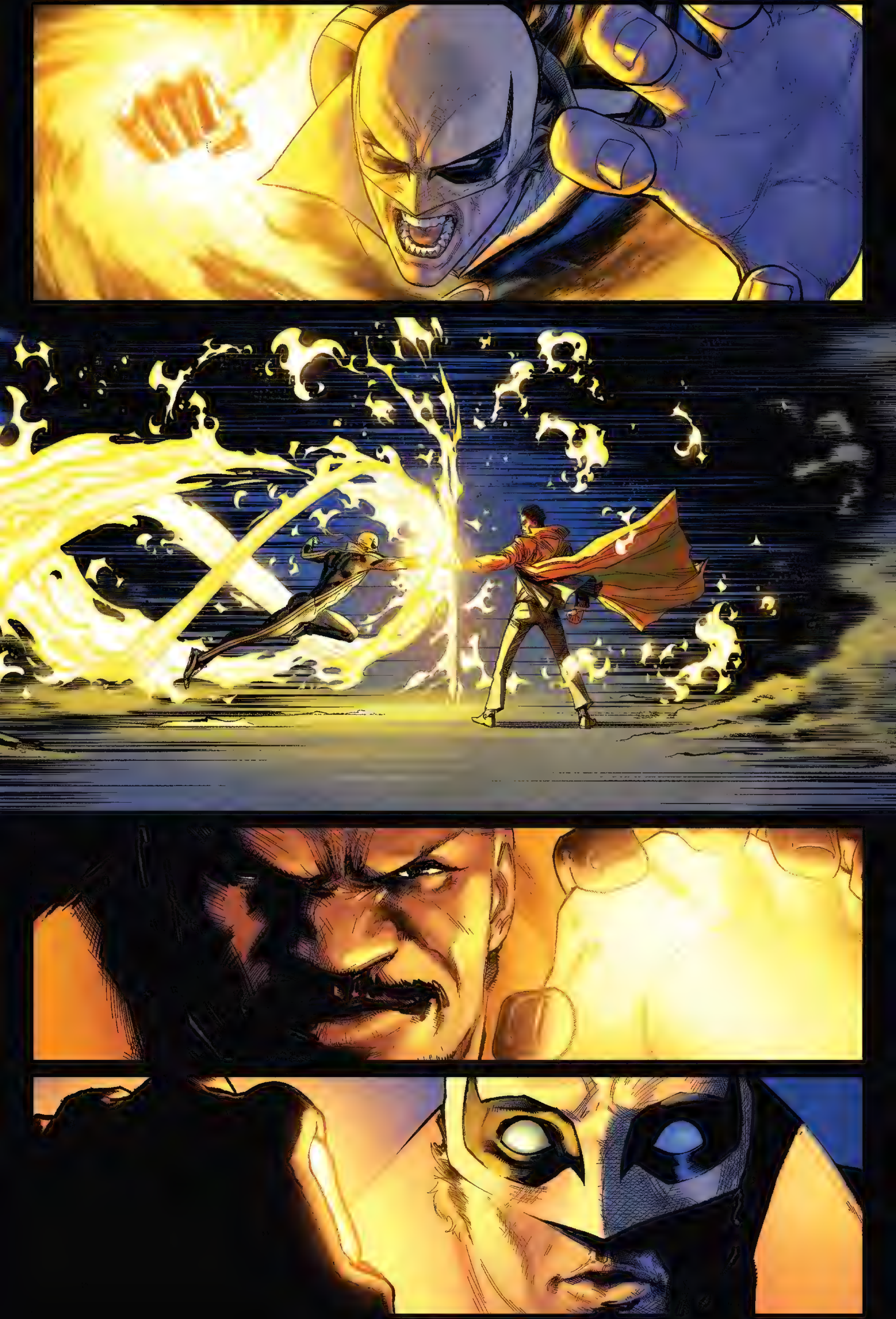

HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
WE WEREN'T LOOKIN' FOR *YOU.*
WE WERE LOOKIN' UP DIAMONDBACK.
I DIDN'T HEAR YOU SNEAK UP ON ME.
I GOT A KID NOW. SHE NAPS. I LEARNED STEALTH.
YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT IT. SETTLING DOWN.
HAVING A COUPLE OF PSYCHOS.
FRANK, QUESTION...
...WHY DID YOU SHOOT AT US BEFORE?
I *HAD* A COUPLE OF KIDS.
THEY WERE *MURDERED!!!*

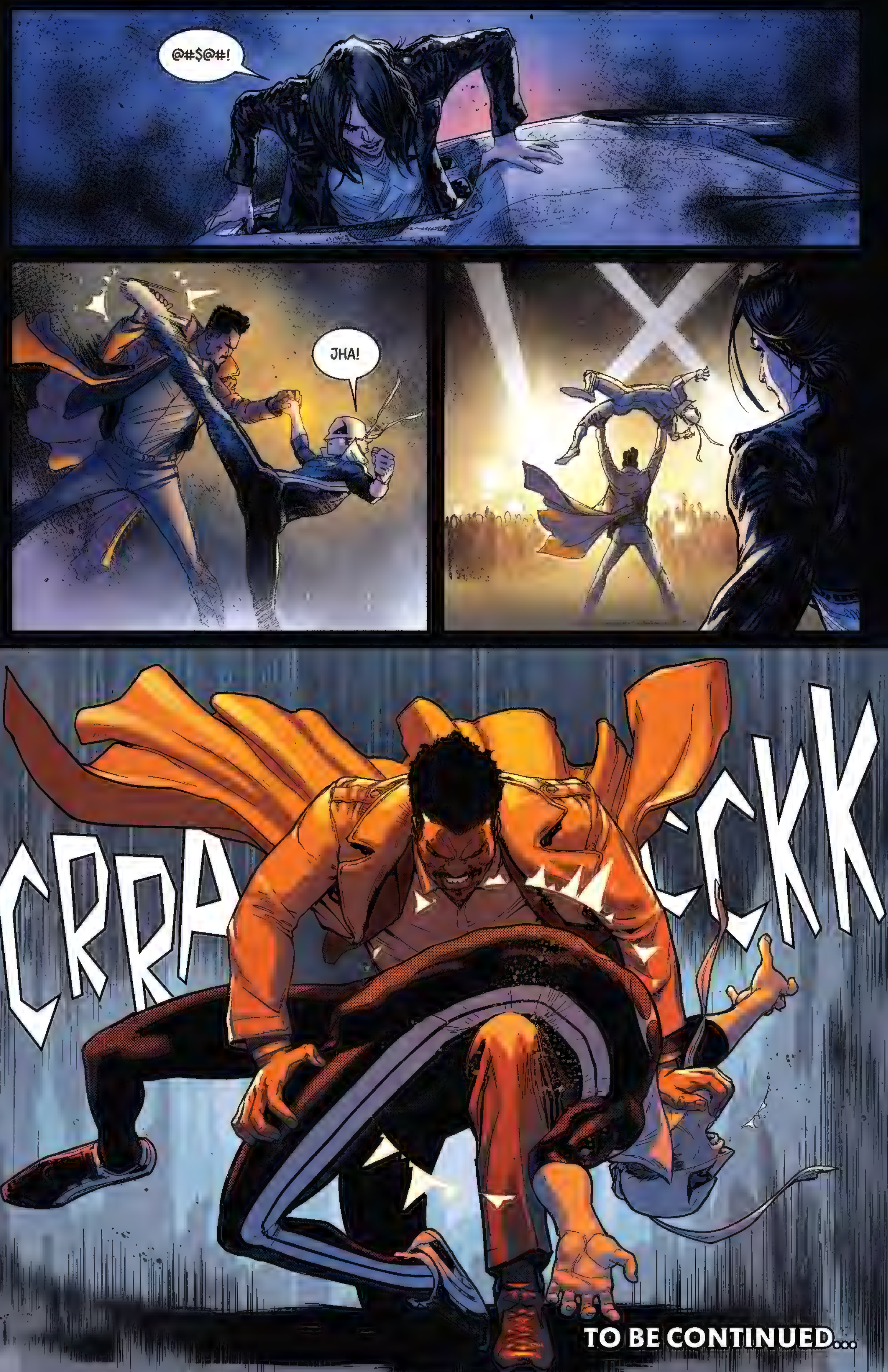

SEE, YOU GOT HIM RILED UP AGAIN.
DID YOU JUST SPLASH ME WITH ACID?
LET GO.
HE CARRIES *ACID* AROUND?
YES, HE'S *CERTIFIABLY INSANE.*
THAT'S WHAT CERTIFIABLY INSANE PEOPLE DO.
DON'T YOU PAINT ME WITH THAT BRUSH, DEVIL MAN.
I FIGHT THE SAME FIGHT *YOU* DO, EXCEPT--
ANOTHER SHIRT.
YES, YES, YOU HAVE THE GUTS TO TAKE IT ALL THE WAY. BRAVO TO YOU.
LUKE, DID YOU EVER LOOK INTO SHIRTS MADE OF UNSTABLE MOLECULES?
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THAT COSTS?
AND SPEAKING OF MONEY, I DON'T HAVE A WAY TO *MAKE* ANY BECAUSE DIAMONDBACK BLEW MY BUSINESS UP WITH A MISSILE.
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY. IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.
NOW WHY YOU TRYING TO KEEP HIM ALL TO YOURSELF?
BECAUSE *I DON'T TRUST PEOPLE IN MASKS!*
COME AGAIN?
DO *YOU* KNOW WHO THAT IS?
BECAUSE I DON'T.


SO YOU'LL FORGIVE ME IF *I DON'T FEEL LIKE--*
SSHH.
GRBLEGRBLE...
DID YOU JUST TAP HIM OUT?
YEAH. HE WASN'T GONNA TELL US ANYTHING.
WELL, HE CERTAINLY WON'T *NOW.*
MAN, THIS PUNK SHOT MY *WIFE*, YOU'RE LUCKY HIS HEAD IS STILL IN THE TRI-STATE AREA. I WAS *PROFESSIONAL.*
YOU KNOW, HE *HAS* A POINT.
WHAT?
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
YES, YOU DO.
WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS.
BUT IT KIND OF FEELS LIKE THINGS HAVE CHANGED, NO?
I MEAN, IF WE'RE REALLY GONNA MAKE A GO AT THIS "DEFENDING THE STREETS" THING...
...WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TRUST AND COUNT ON EACH OTHER IN PRETTY STRESSFUL--
LET ME THINK ABOUT IT.
HEY, WE BAGGED *THE PUNISHER.*
HE'LL MURDER A BUNCH OF PRISONERS IN JAIL BEFORE HIS DARING ESCAPE NEXT MONTH.
YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO RUIN A PARTY.
LET'S HOPE JESSICA AND DANNY ARE HAVING A *BETTER* PARTY.
SEE? IT'S NICE KNOWING THEIR NAMES.
I SAID I'D THINK ABOUT IT.
CAN I GUESS?
IS IT GARY?

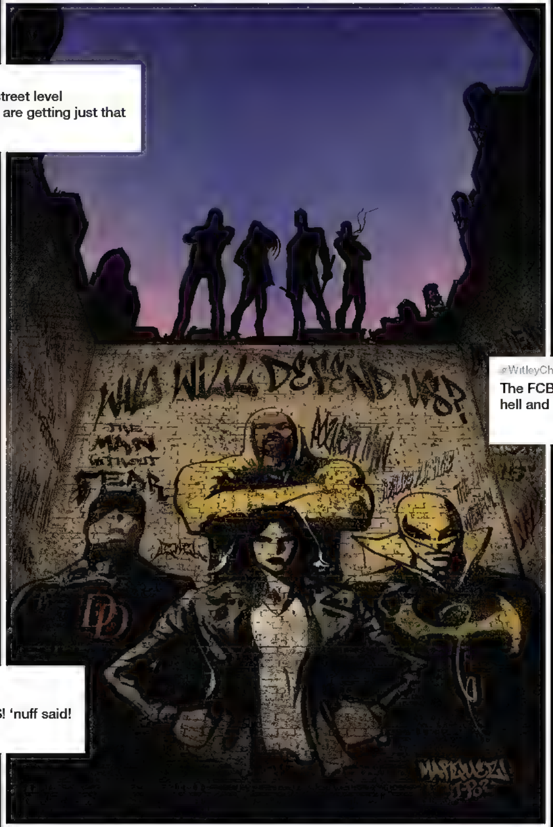

GARY WHO?
I DON'T KNOW.
HE JUST THINKS DAREDEVIL'S REAL NAME IS GARY.
DO WE *KNOW* A GARY?
LUKE THINKS SO.
A STAKE-OUT.
I HAVE TO PEE.
I DO IT ALL THE TIME. IT'S NOT SEXY.
SEE?
I *NEVER* HAVE TO PEE.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU-- HOLD ON.
YOU GOT THE LICENSE PLATE?
THERE ISN'T ONE.
HE'S GOOD.
HOLD ON.


@#$@#!
WE'RE OUT OF HERE.
I DON'T THINK SO.
YOU KNEW WE WOULD COME FOR YOU.
SURE. I JUST DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO BE ALL STUPID.
WE DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS.
FIGHTING IS NOT THE ANSWER...
...IS SOMETHING I *USUALLY* SAY.
IS IT NOW?
FRUUMMP
COM ON!




@#$@#!
JHA!
CRRACCKK
TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT!



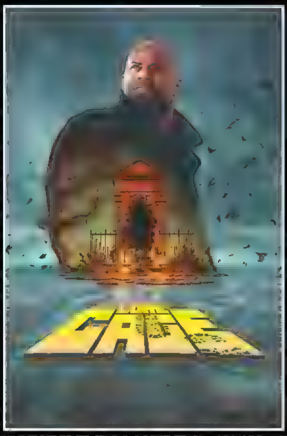
@kylejohnson2613
I love the FCBD issue, I love street level adventures and I'm happy we are getting just that #Defenderscomic

@WitleyChip
The FCBD #Defenderscomic was promising as hell and beautiful to look at.

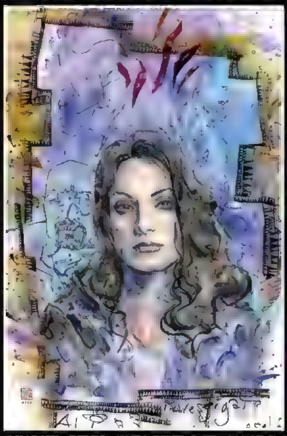
@TDSpidey616
#Defenderscomic
SWEET CHRISTMAS! 'nuff said!

DEFENDERS #4

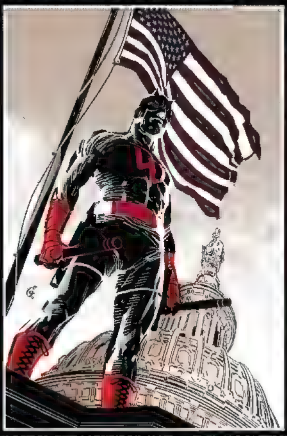
ALL ON SALE NEXT MONTH!



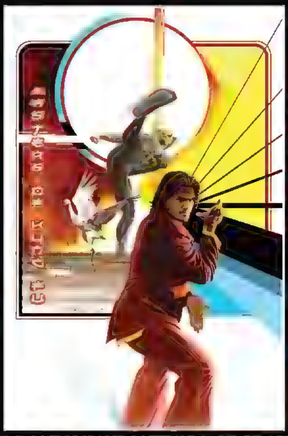
LUKE CAGE #4



JESSICA JONES #11



DAREDEVIL #25



IRON FIST #6

We want to hear from you! Send your letters to MHEROES@MARVEL.COM marked "OKAY TO PRINT," or tweet us using the hashtags #DefendersComic and #OKtoprint for a chance to see your tweet printed in future issues!

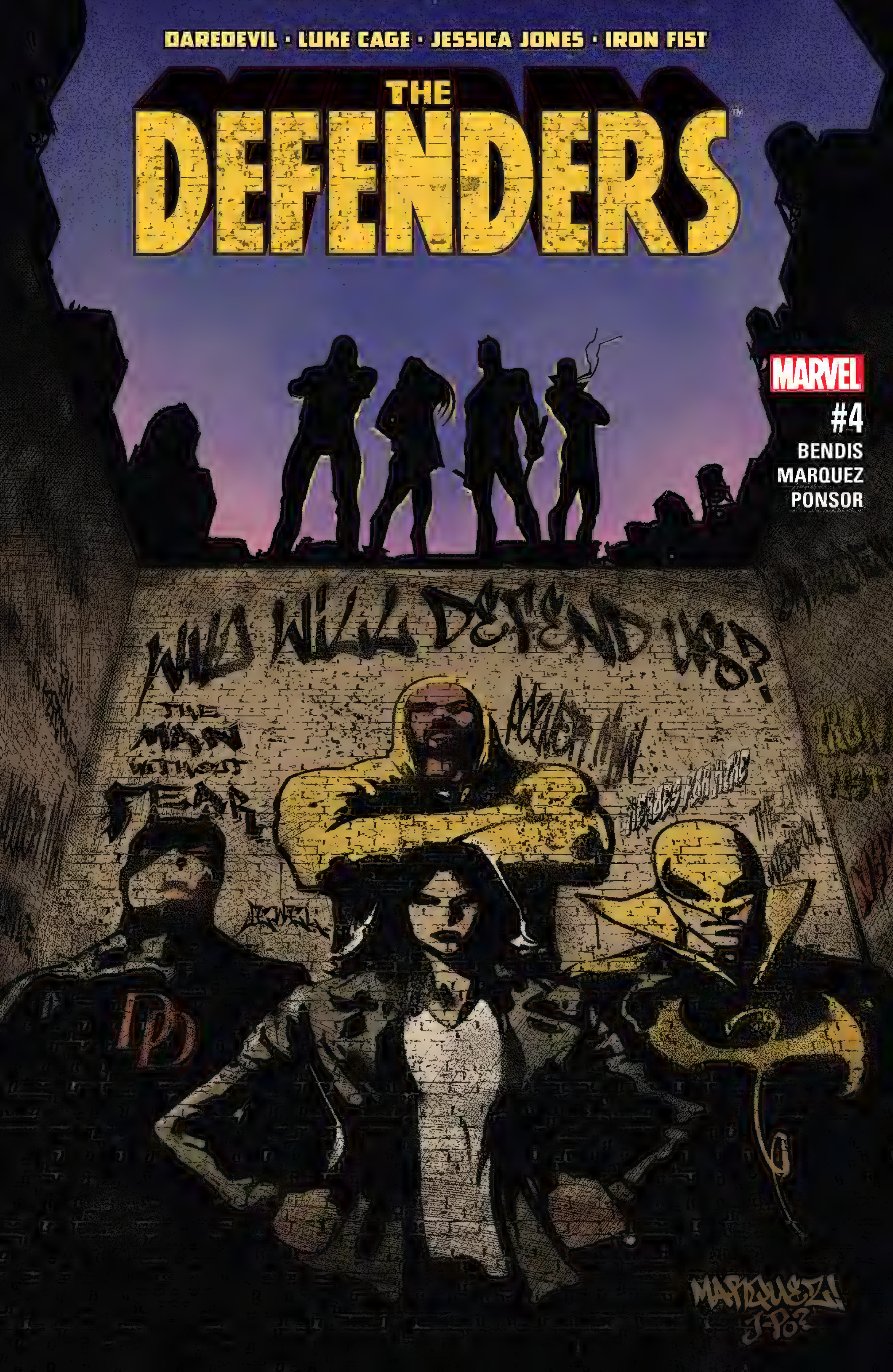
DAREDEVIL · LUKE CAGE · JESSICA JONES · IRON FIST

THE DEFENDERS™

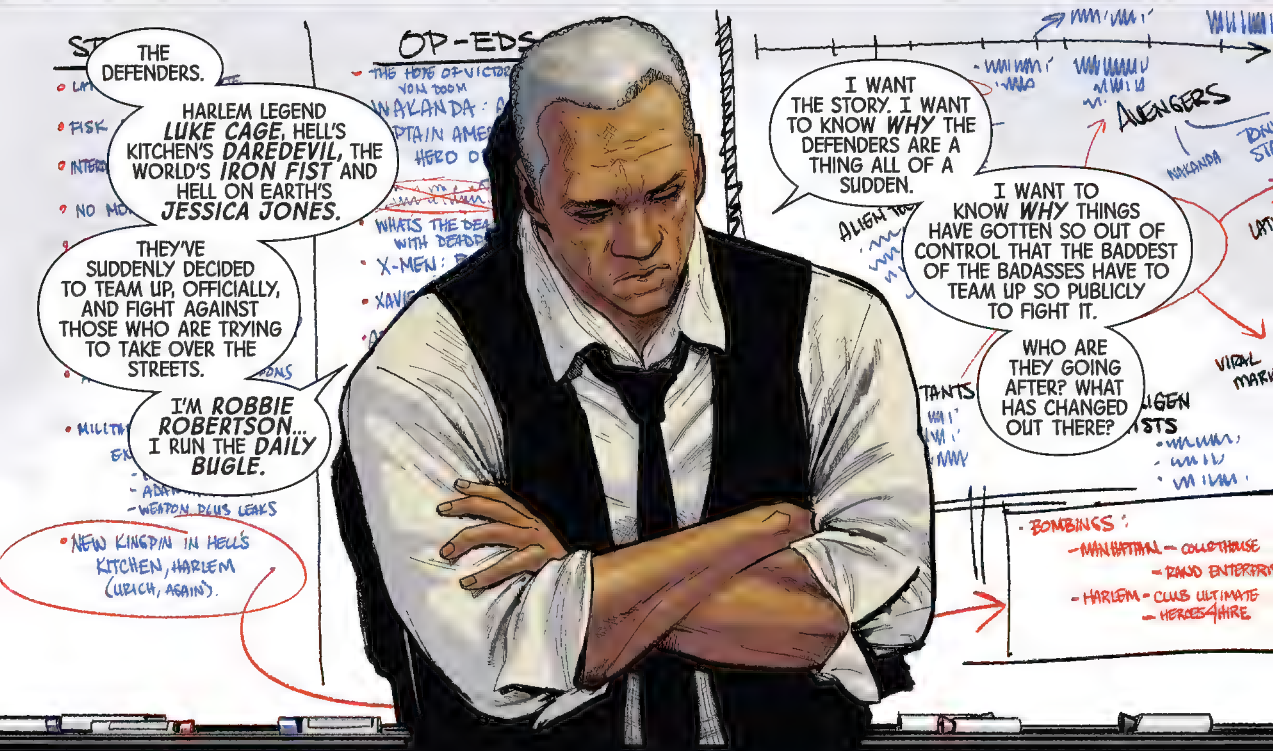
MARVEL

#4

BENDIS
MARQUEZ
PONSOR


WHO WILL DEFEND US?
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR
POWER MAN
JEWEL
IRON FIST
MARQUEZ! J-Po?

THE DEFENDERS


THE DEFENDERS.
HARLEM LEGEND *LUKE CAGE,* HELL'S KITCHEN'S *DAREDEVIL,* THE WORLD'S *IRON FIST* AND HELL ON EARTH'S *JESSICA JONES.*
THEY'VE SUDDENLY DECIDED TO TEAM UP, OFFICIALLY, AND FIGHT AGAINST THOSE WHO ARE TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE STREETS.
I'M *ROBBIE ROBERTSON*... I RUN THE *DAILY BUGLE.*
I WANT THE STORY. I WANT TO KNOW *WHY* THE DEFENDERS ARE A THING ALL OF A SUDDEN.
I WANT TO KNOW *WHY* THINGS HAVE GOTTEN SO OUT OF CONTROL THAT THE BADDEST OF THE BADDASES HAVE TO TEAM UP SO PUBLICLY TO FIGHT IT.
WHO ARE THEY GOING AFTER? WHAT HAS CHANGED OUT THERE?
OP-EDS
FISK
AVENGERS
NAKANDA
VIRAL
WEAPON PLUS LEAKS
NEW KINGPIN IN HELL'S KITCHEN, HARLEM (URICH, AGAIN)
BOMBINGS:
MANHATTAN – COLLEGEHOUSE
HARLEM – CLUB ULTIMATE
HEROES4HIRE

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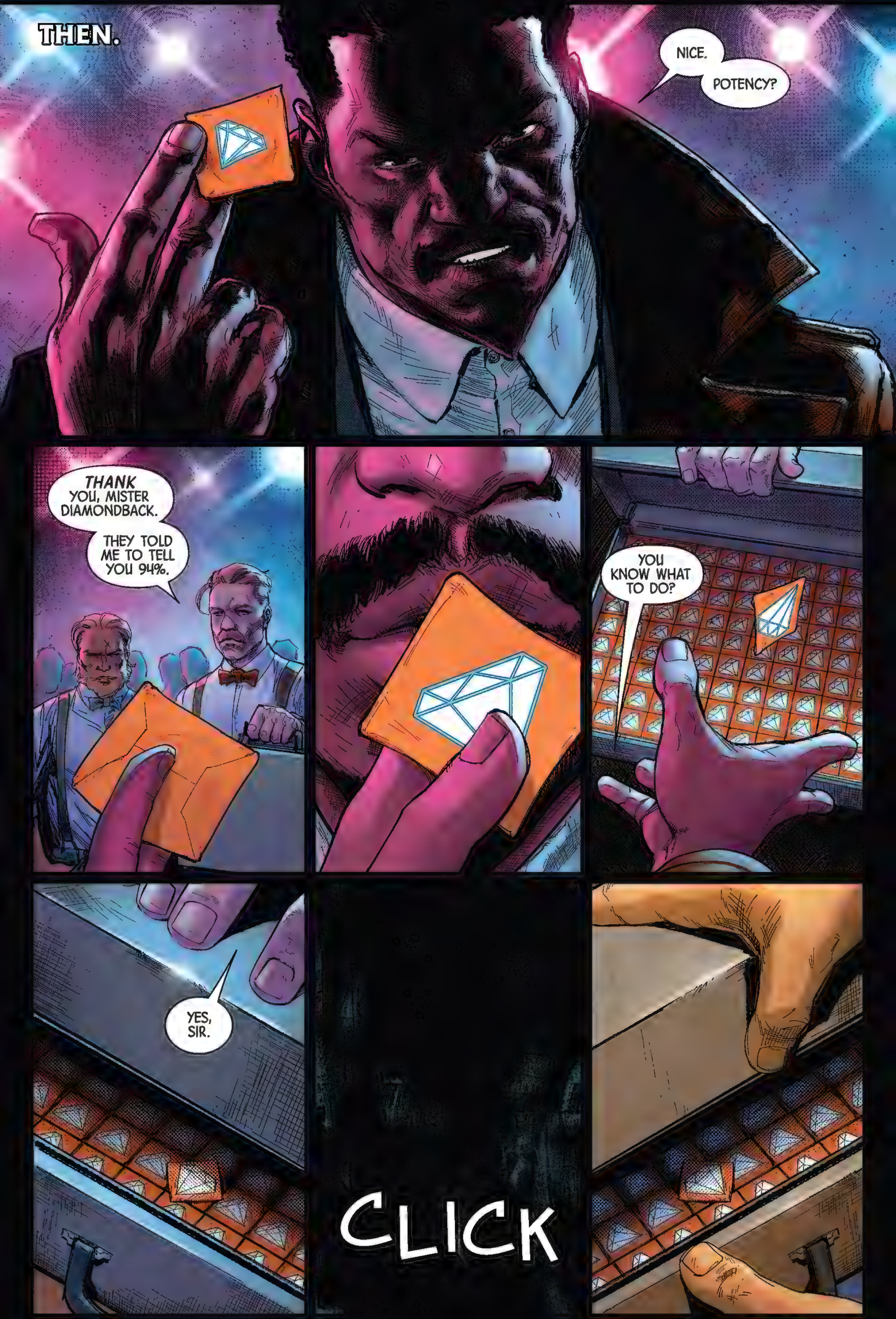
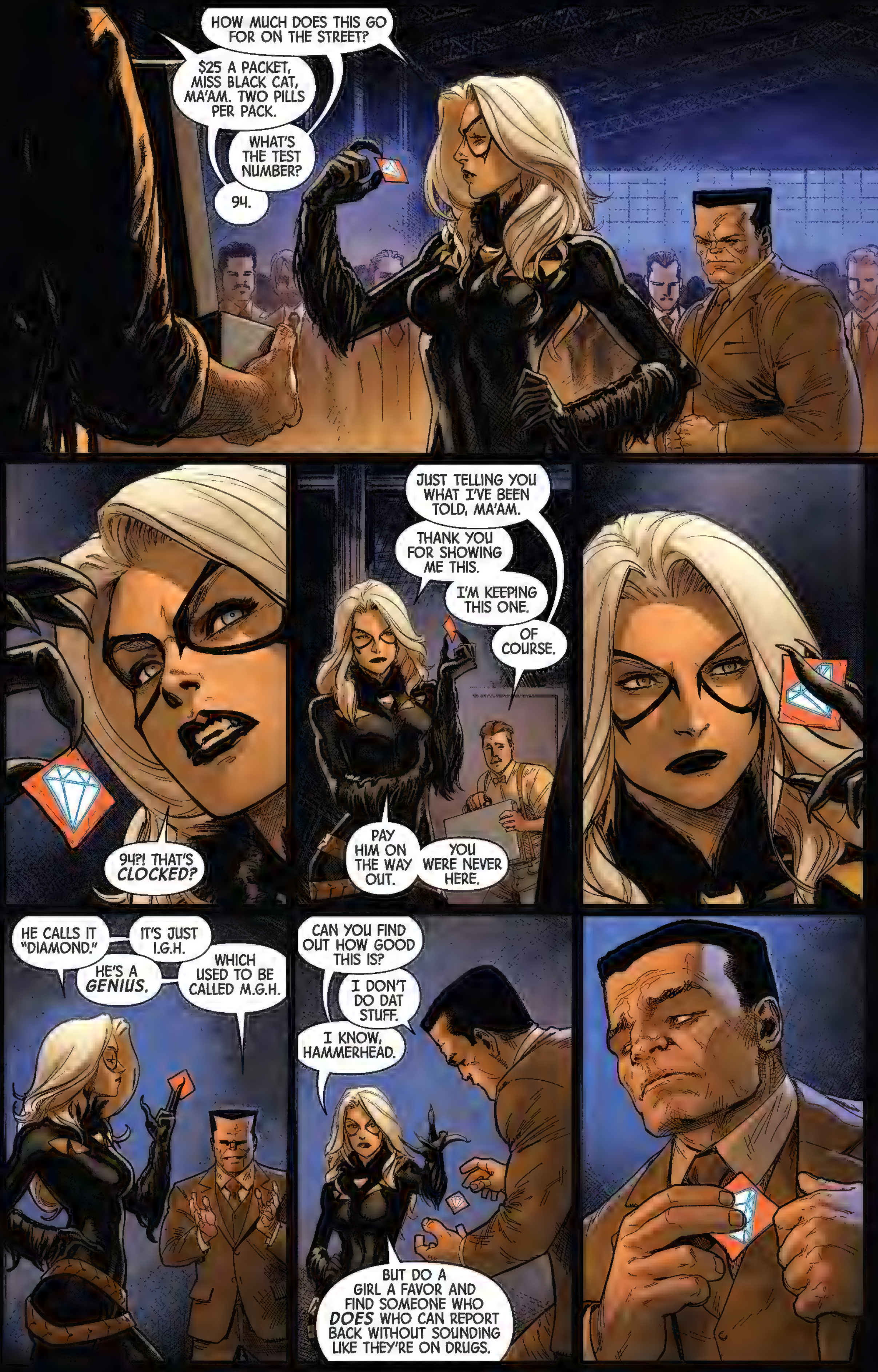
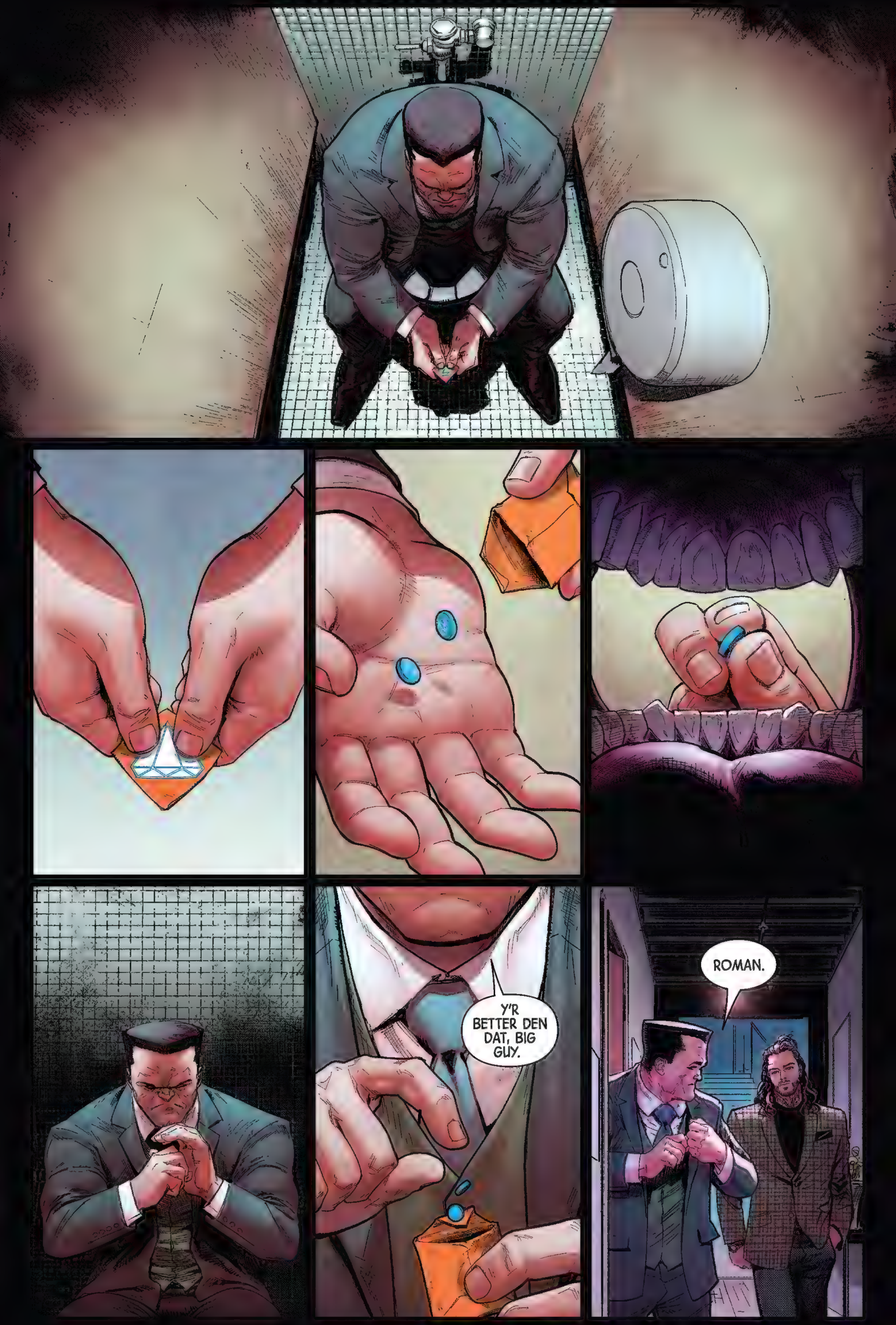
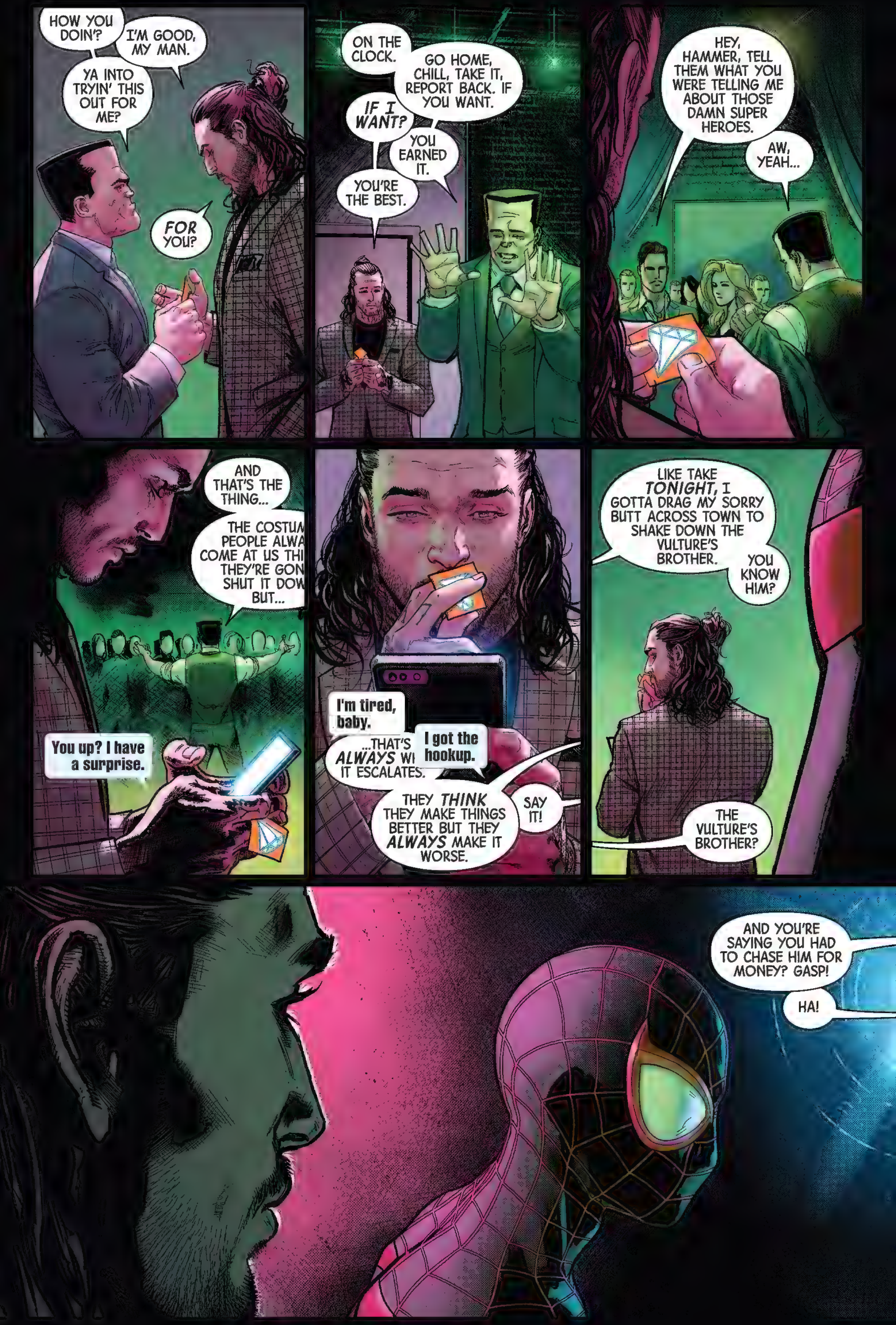
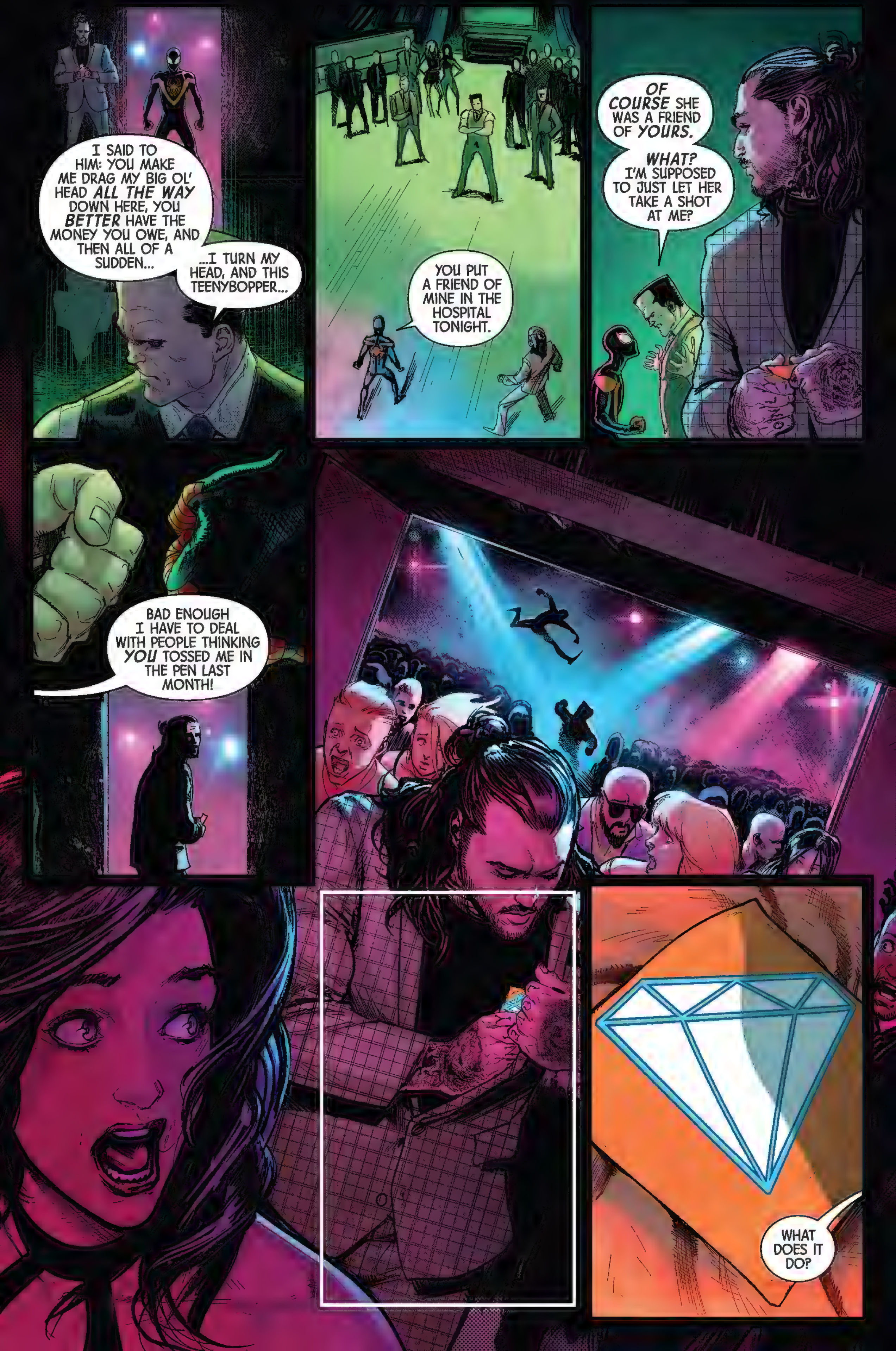
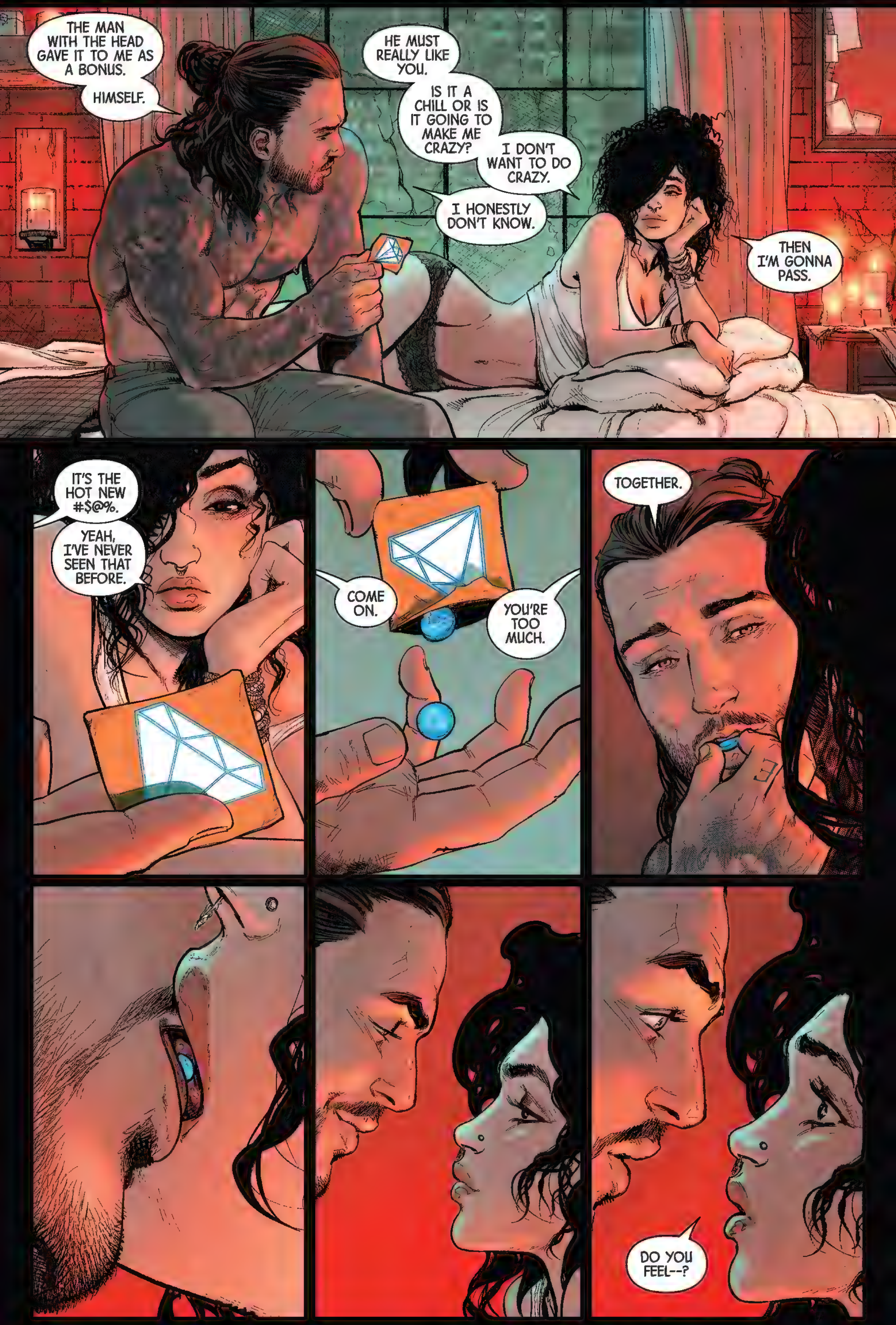

THEN.
NICE.
POTENCY?
THANK YOU, MISTER DIAMONDBACK.
THEY TOLD ME TO TELL YOU 94%.
YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?
YES, SIR.
CLICK

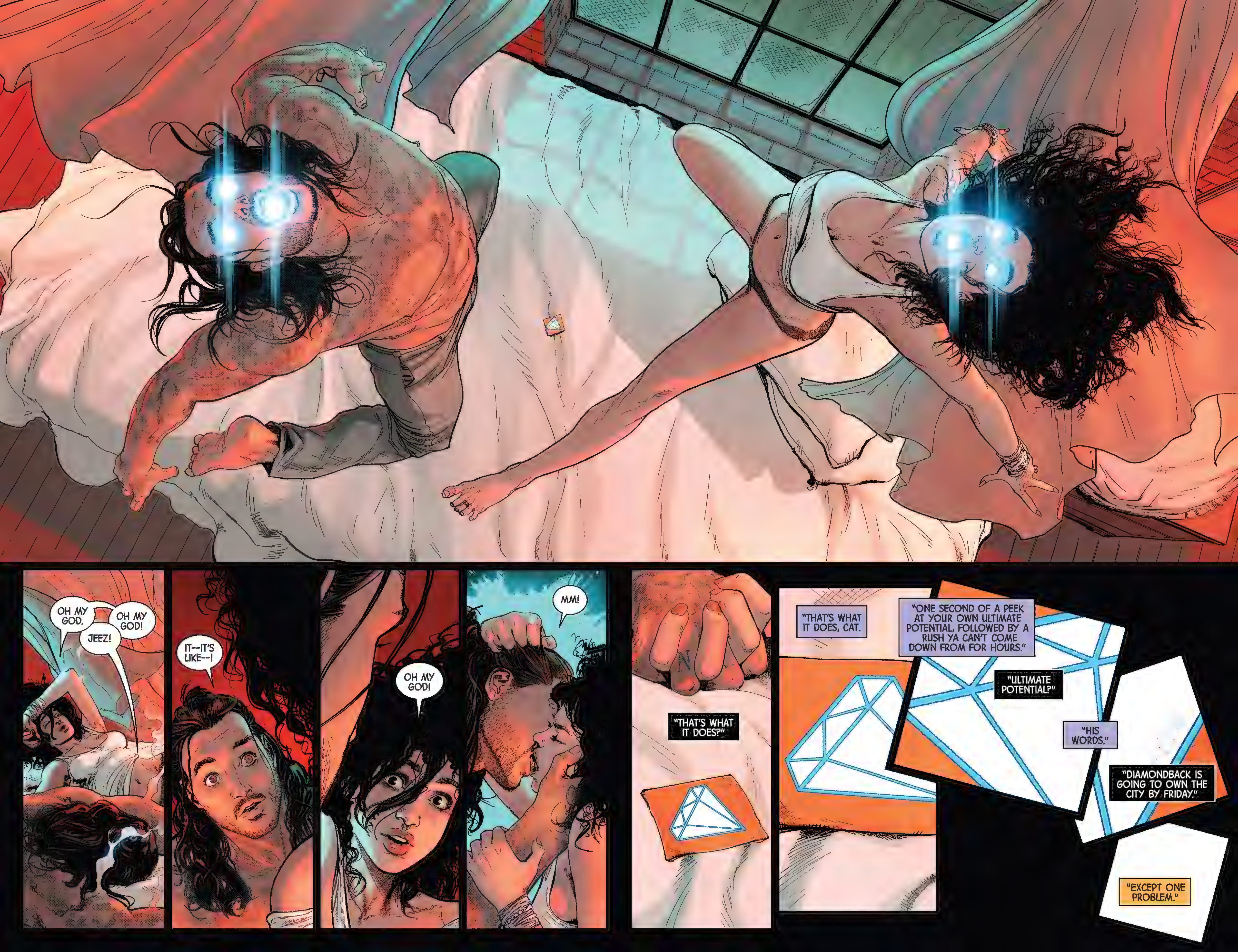

HOW MUCH DOES THIS GO FOR ON THE STREET?
$25 A PACKET, MISS BLACK CAT, MA'AM. TWO PILLS PER PACK.
WHAT'S THE TEST NUMBER?
94.
94?! THAT'S *CLOCKED?*
JUST TELLING YOU WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD, MA'AM.
THANK YOU FOR SHOWING ME THIS.
I'M KEEPING THIS ONE.
OF COURSE.
PAY HIM ON THE WAY OUT.
YOU WERE NEVER HERE.
HE CALLS IT "DIAMOND."
IT'S JUST I.G.H.
HE'S A *GENIUS.*
WHICH USED TO BE CALLED M.G.H.
CAN YOU FIND OUT HOW GOOD THIS IS?
I DON'T DO DAT STUFF.
I KNOW, HAMMERHEAD.
BUT DO A GIRL A FAVOR AND FIND SOMEONE WHO *DOES* WHO CAN REPORT BACK WITHOUT SOUNDING LIKE THEY'RE ON DRUGS.

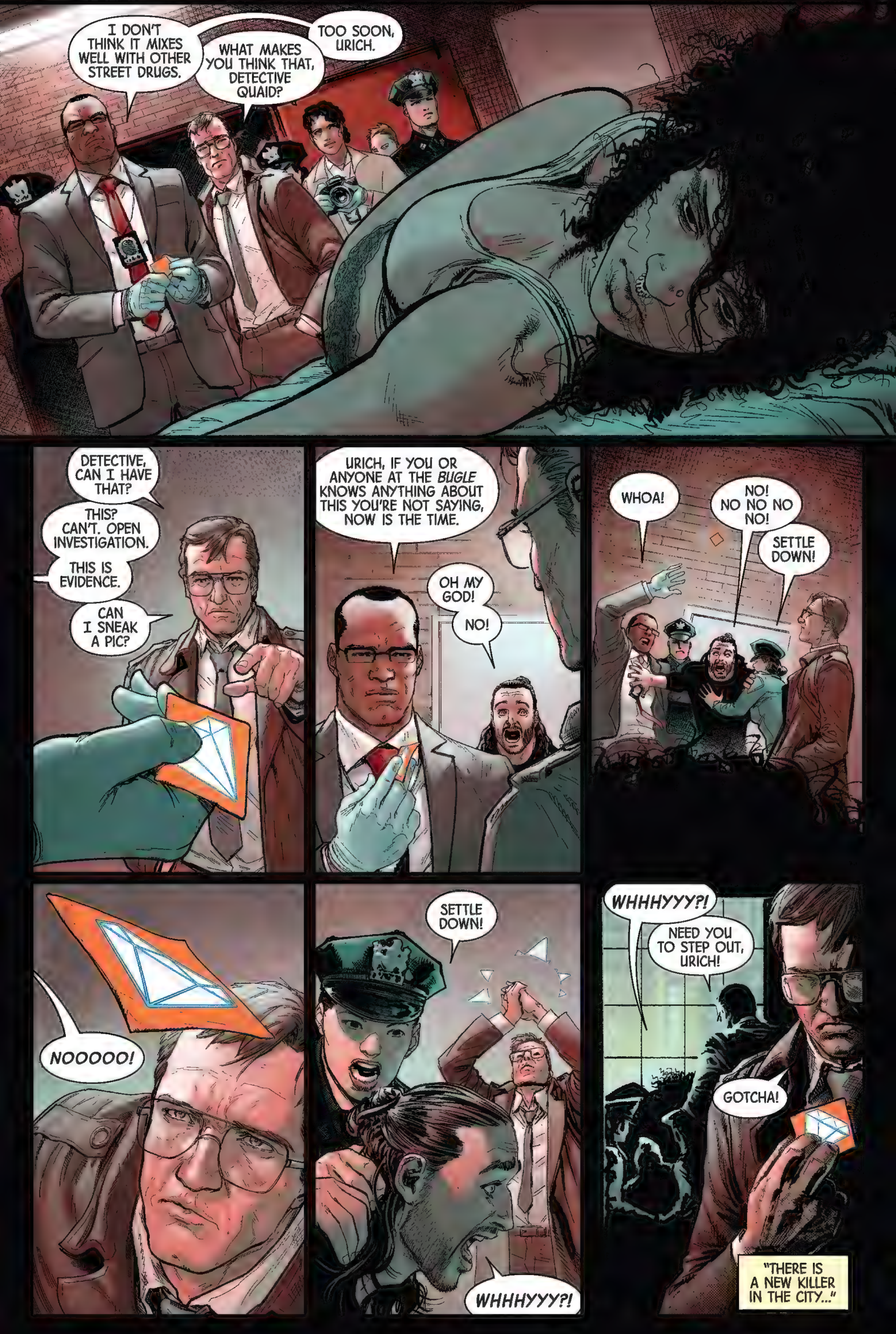

Y'R BETTER DEN DAT, BIG GUY.
ROMAN.

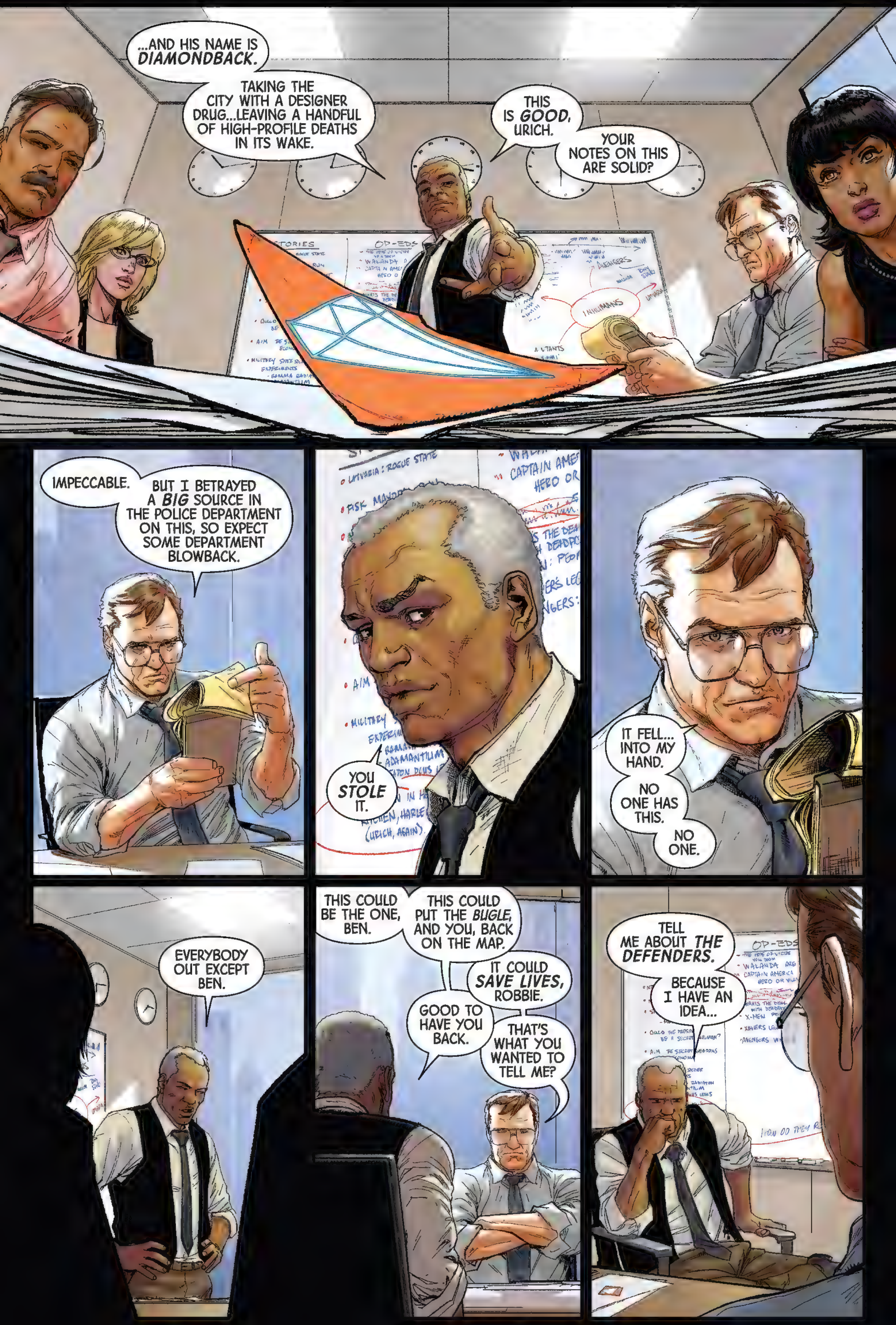

HOW YOU DOIN'?
I'M GOOD, MY MAN.
YA INTO TRYIN' THIS OUT FOR ME?
FOR YOU?
ON THE CLOCK.
GO HOME, CHILL, TAKE IT, REPORT BACK. IF YOU WANT.
IF I WANT?
YOU EARNED IT.
YOU'RE THE BEST.
HEY, HAMMER, TELL THEM WHAT YOU WERE TELLING ME ABOUT THOSE DAMN SUPER HEROES.
AW, YEAH...
AND THAT'S THE THING...
THE COSTUM PEOPLE ALWA COME AT US THI THEY'RE GON SHUT IT DOW BUT...
You up? I have a surprise.
I'm tired, baby.
...THAT'S ALWAYS WI IT ESCALATES.
I got the hookup.
THEY THINK THEY MAKE THINGS BETTER BUT THEY ALWAYS MAKE IT WORSE.
SAY IT!
LIKE TAKE TONIGHT, I GOTTA DRAG MY SORRY BUTT ACROSS TOWN TO SHAKE DOWN THE VULTURE'S BROTHER.
YOU KNOW HIM?
THE VULTURE'S BROTHER?
AND YOU'RE SAYING YOU HAD TO CHASE HIM FOR MONEY? GASP!
HA!

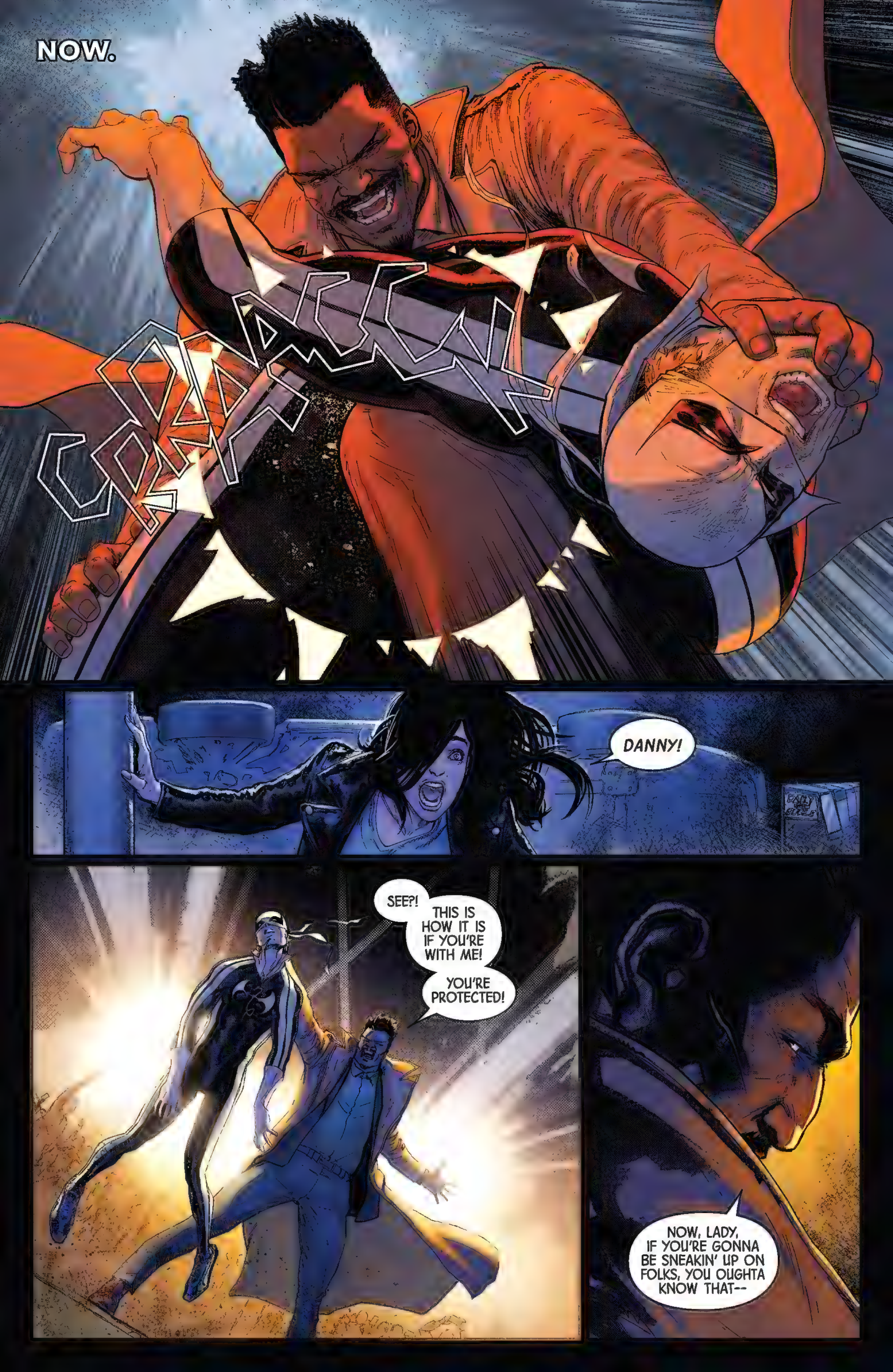

I SAID TO HIM: YOU MAKE ME DRAG MY BIG OL' HEAD *ALL THE WAY* DOWN HERE, YOU *BETTER* HAVE THE MONEY YOU OWE, AND THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN...
...I TURN MY HEAD, AND THIS TEENYBOPPER...
YOU PUT A FRIEND OF MINE IN THE HOSPITAL TONIGHT.
OF COURSE SHE WAS A FRIEND OF *YOURS.*
WHAT? I'M SUPPOSED TO JUST LET HER TAKE A SHOT AT ME?
BAD ENOUGH I HAVE TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE THINKING *YOU* TOSSED ME IN THE PEN LAST MONTH!
WHAT DOES IT DO?

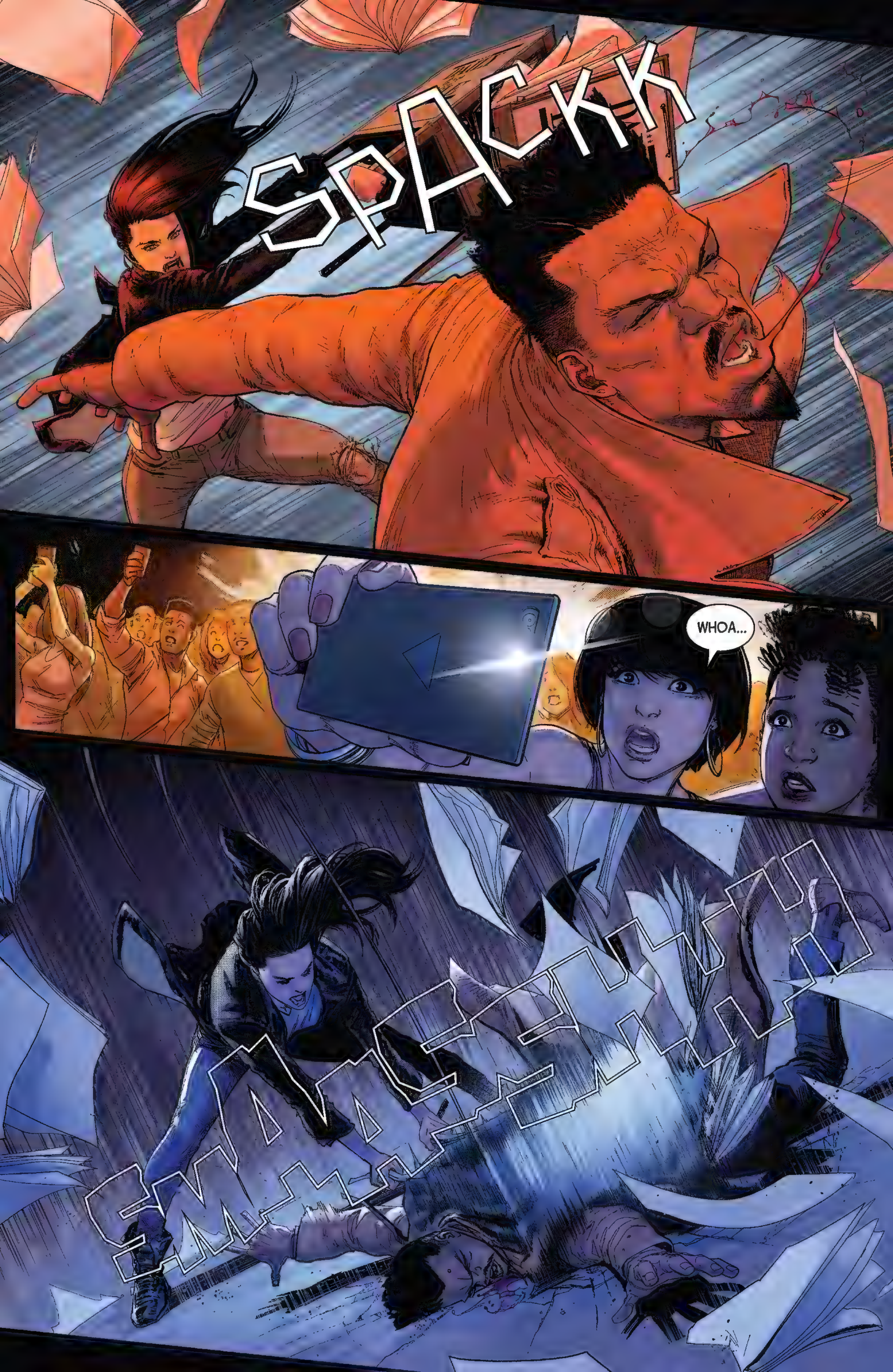

THE MAN WITH THE HEAD GAVE IT TO ME AS A BONUS.
HIMSELF.
HE MUST REALLY LIKE YOU.
IS IT A CHILL OR IS IT GOING TO MAKE ME CRAZY?
I DON'T WANT TO DO CRAZY.
I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW.
THEN I'M GONNA PASS.
IT'S THE HOT NEW #$@%.
YEAH, I'VE NEVER SEEN THAT BEFORE.
COME ON.
YOU'RE TOO MUCH.
TOGETHER.
DO YOU FEEL--?

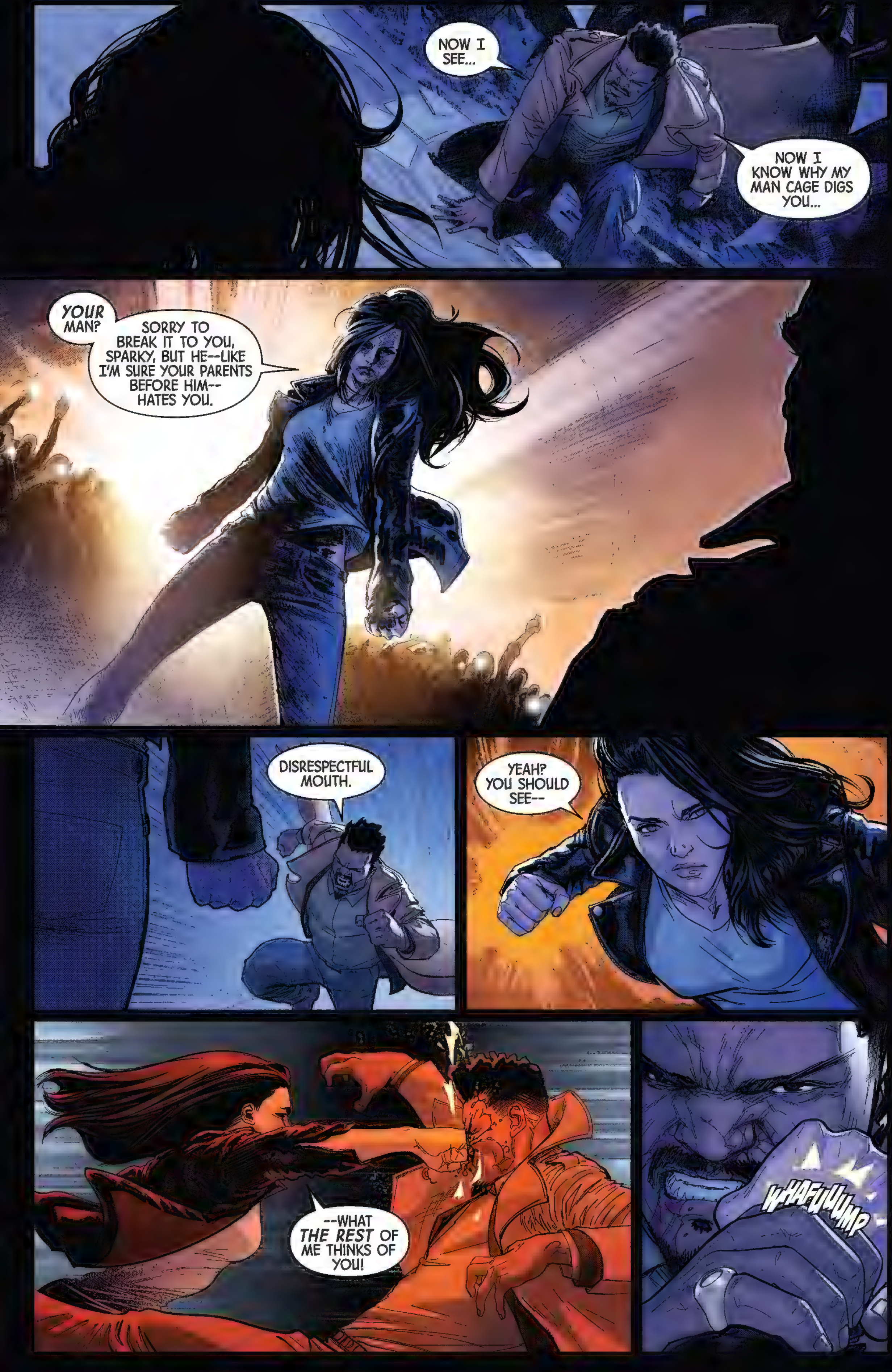

"OH MY GOD."
"JEEZ!"
"OH MY GOD!"
"IT--IT'S LIKE--!"
"OH MY GOD!"
"MM!"
"THAT'S WHAT IT DOES?"
"THAT'S WHAT IT DOES, CAT.
"ONE SECOND OF A PEEK AT YOUR OWN ULTIMATE POTENTIAL, FOLLOWED BY A RUSH YA CAN'T COME DOWN FROM FOR HOURS."
"ULTIMATE POTENTIAL?"
"HIS WORDS."
"DIAMONDBACK IS GOING TO OWN THE CITY BY FRIDAY."
"EXCEPT ONE PROBLEM."

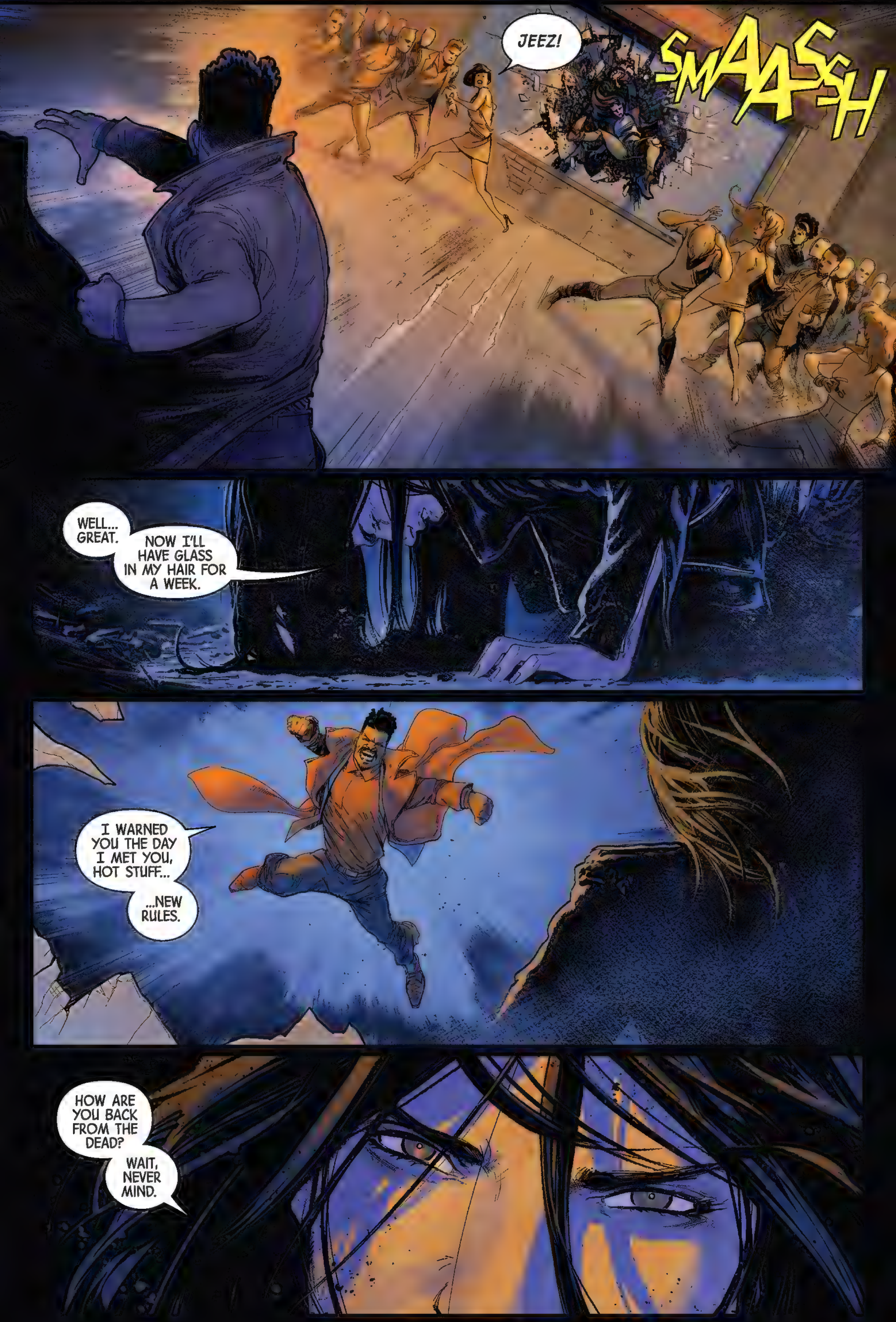

I DON'T THINK IT MIXES WELL WITH OTHER STREET DRUGS.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT, DETECTIVE QUAID?
TOO SOON, URICH.
DETECTIVE, CAN I HAVE THAT?
THIS? CAN'T. OPEN INVESTIGATION.
THIS IS EVIDENCE.
CAN I SNEAK A PIC?
URICH, IF YOU OR ANYONE AT THE *BUGLE* KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT THIS YOU'RE NOT SAYING, NOW IS THE TIME.
OH MY GOD!
NO!
WHOA!
NO! NO NO NO NO!
SETTLE DOWN!
NOOOOO!
SETTLE DOWN!
WHHHYYY?!
WHHHYYY?!
NEED YOU TO STEP OUT, URICH!
GOTCHA!
"THERE IS A NEW KILLER IN THE CITY..."

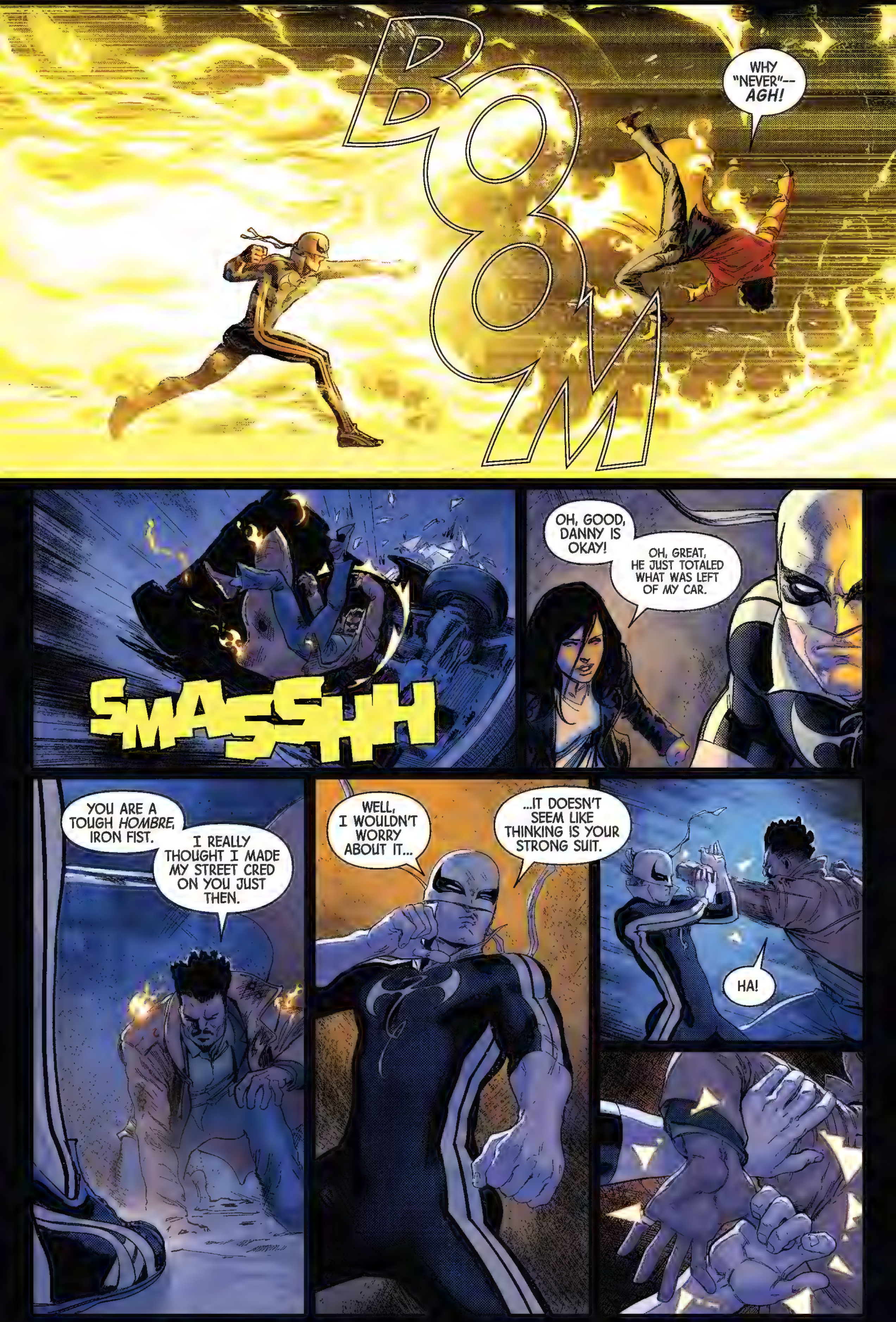

...AND HIS NAME IS *DIAMONDBACK.*
TAKING THE CITY WITH A DESIGNER DRUG...LEAVING A HANDFUL OF HIGH-PROFILE DEATHS IN ITS WAKE.
THIS IS *GOOD,* URICH.
YOUR NOTES ON THIS ARE SOLID?
IMPECCABLE.
BUT I BETRAYED A *BIG* SOURCE IN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT ON THIS, SO EXPECT SOME DEPARTMENT BLOWBACK.
YOU *STOLE* IT.
IT FELL... INTO MY HAND.
NO ONE HAS THIS.
NO ONE.
EVERYBODY OUT EXCEPT BEN.
THIS COULD BE THE ONE, BEN.
THIS COULD PUT THE *BUGLE,* AND YOU, BACK ON THE MAP.
IT COULD *SAVE LIVES,* ROBBIE.
GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.
THAT'S WHAT YOU WANTED TO TELL ME?
TELL ME ABOUT *THE DEFENDERS.*
BECAUSE I HAVE AN IDEA...

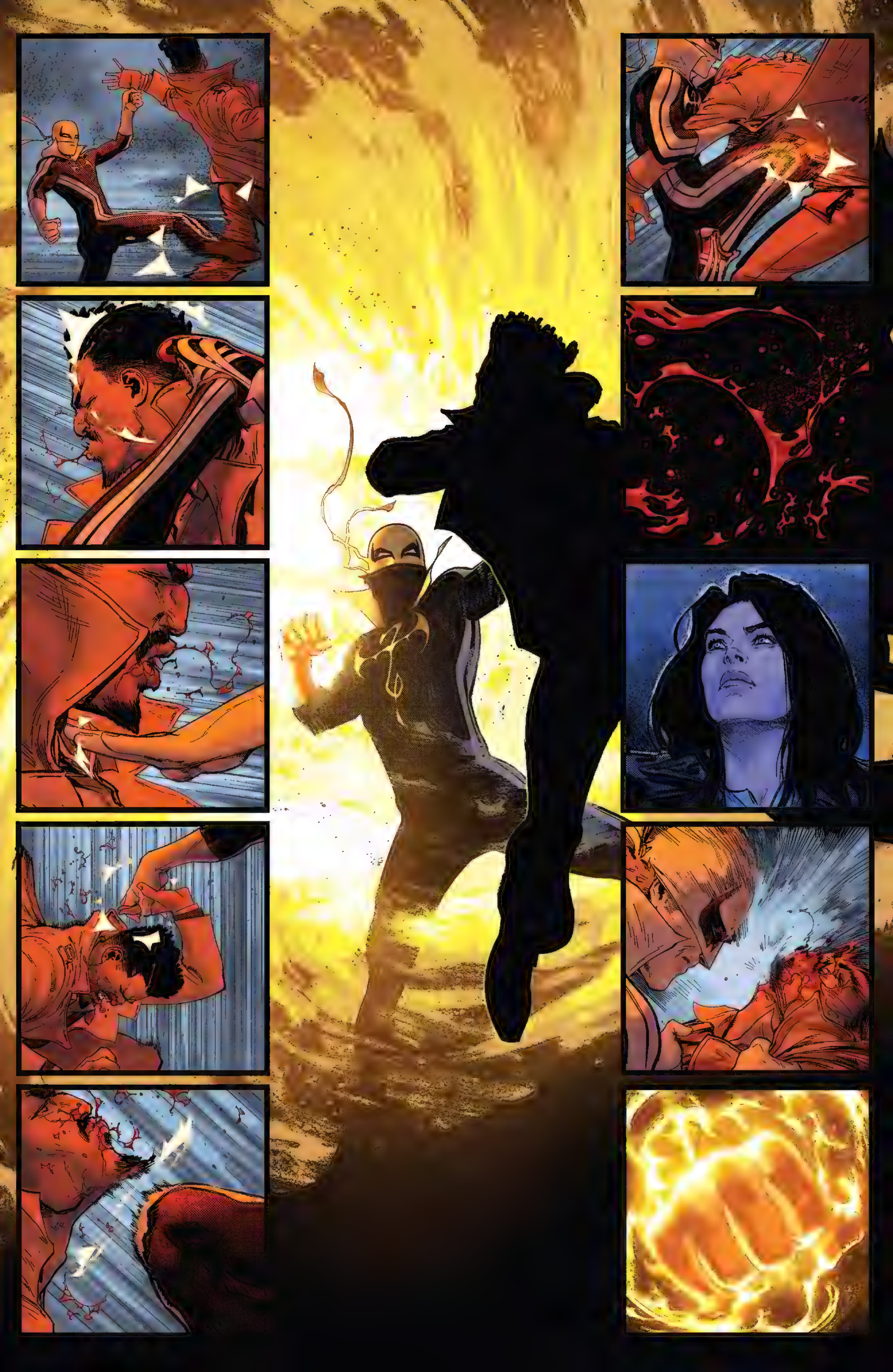

NOW.
DANNY!
SEE?!
THIS IS HOW IT IS IF YOU'RE WITH ME!
YOU'RE PROTECTED!
NOW, LADY, IF YOU'RE GONNA BE SNEAKIN' UP ON FOLKS, YOU OUGHTA KNOW THAT--

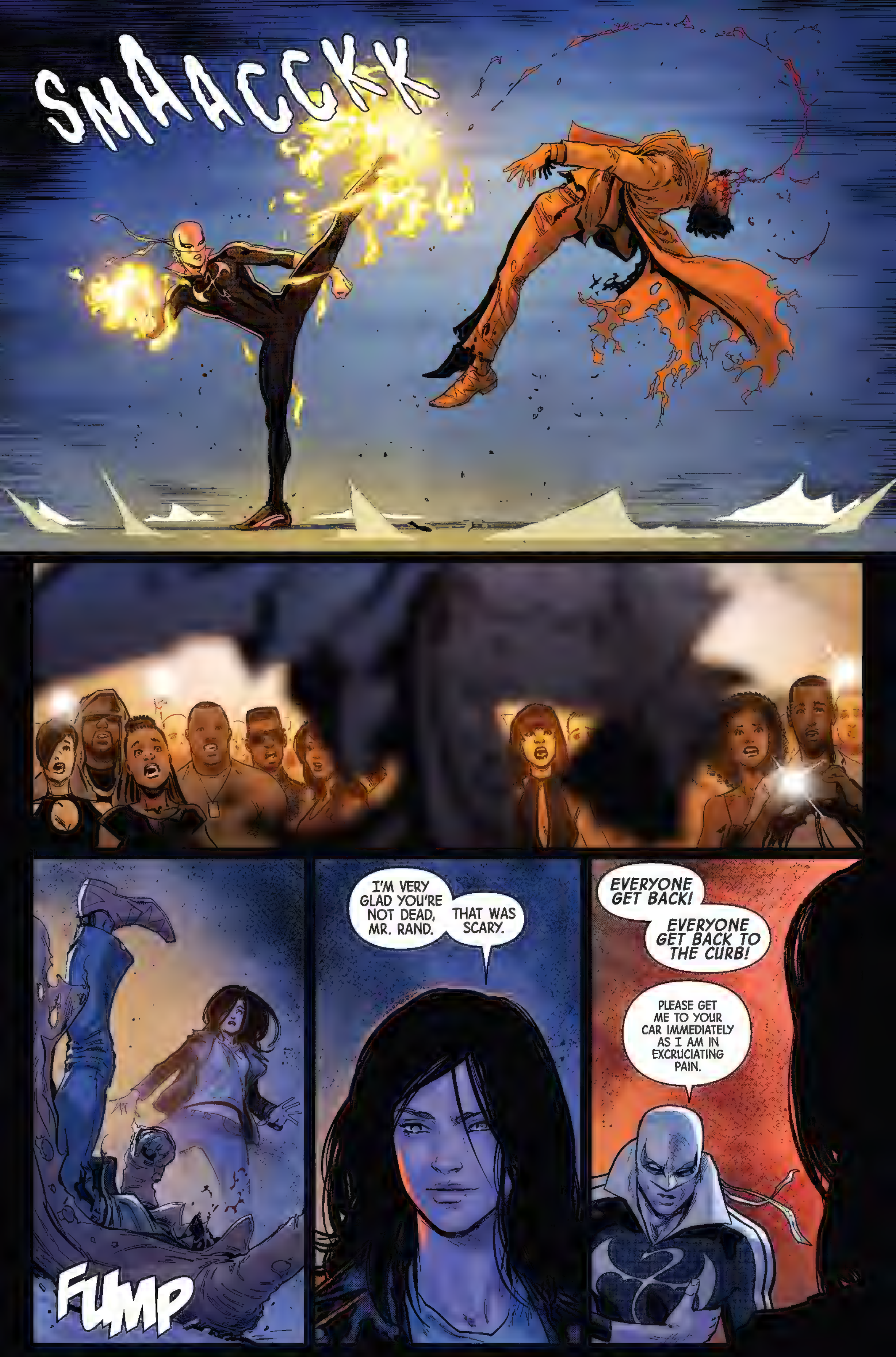

SPACKK
WHOA...
SMASHHH

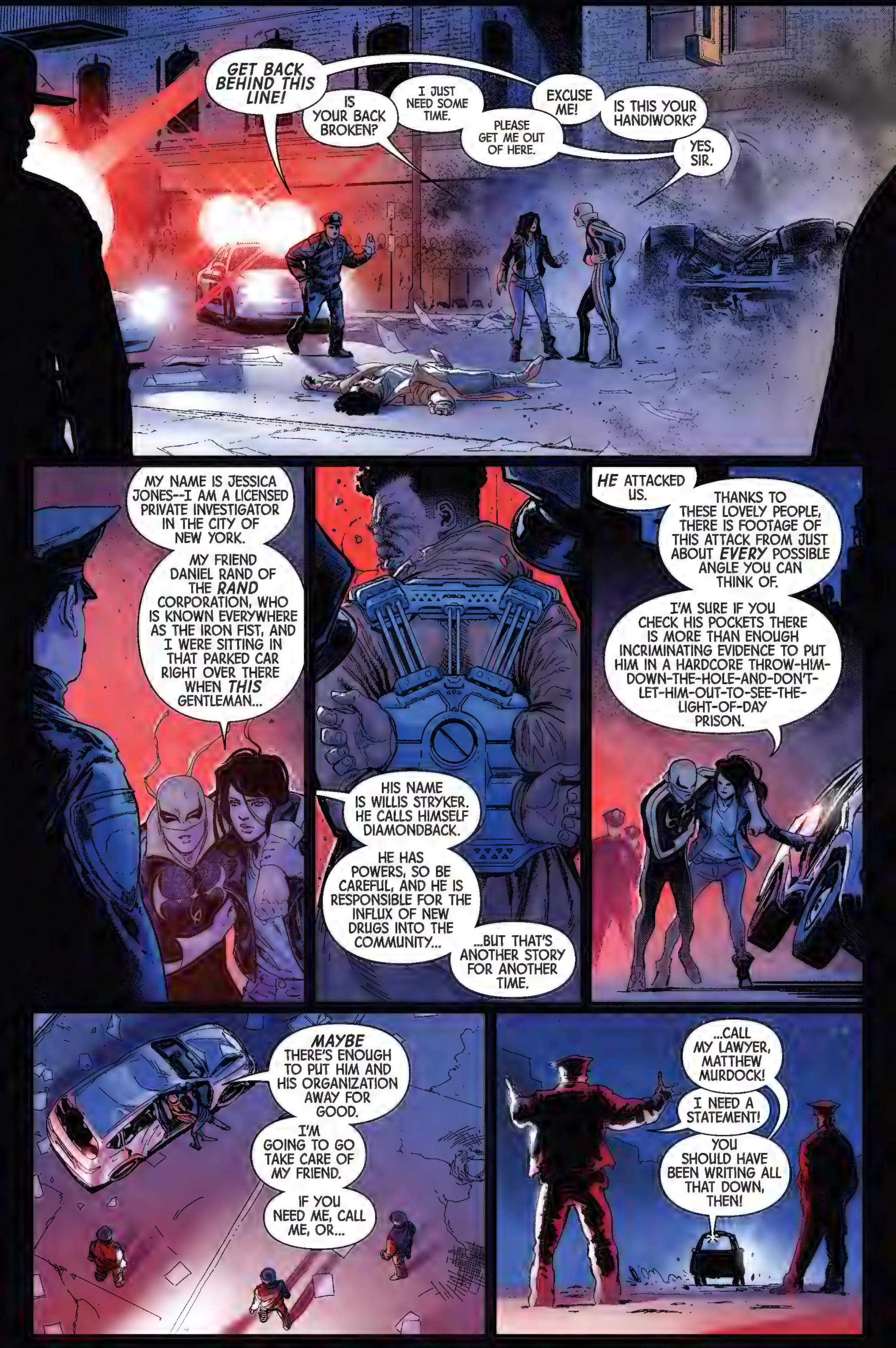

NOW I SEE...
NOW I KNOW WHY MY MAN CAGE DIGS YOU...
YOUR MAN?
SORRY TO BREAK IT TO YOU, SPARKY, BUT HE--LIKE I'M SURE YOUR PARENTS BEFORE HIM--HATES YOU.
DISRESPECTFUL MOUTH.
YEAH? YOU SHOULD SEE--
--WHAT *THE REST* OF ME THINKS OF YOU!
WHAFUUUMP

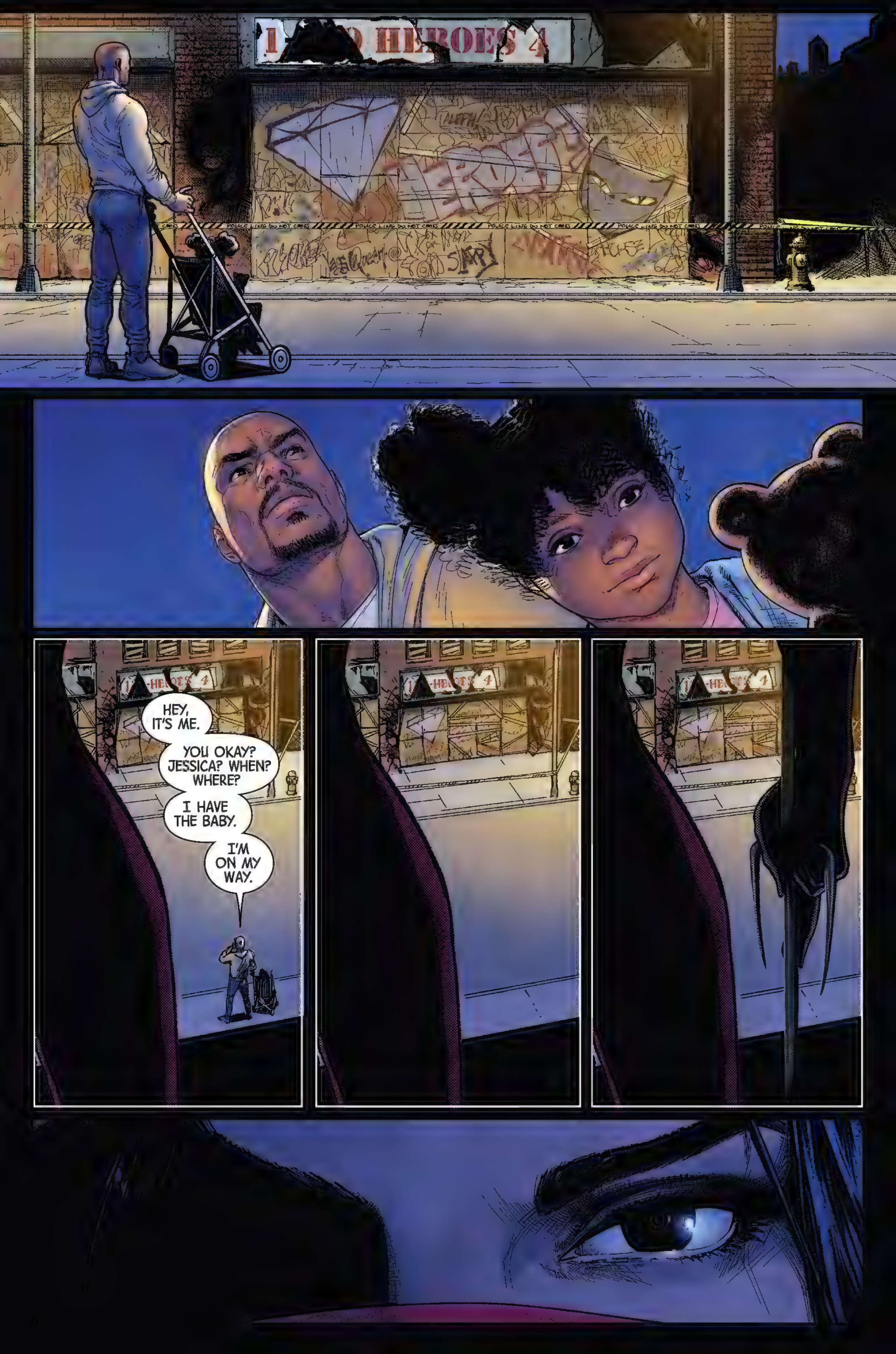

JEEZ!
SMAASSH
WELL... GREAT.
NOW I'LL HAVE GLASS IN MY HAIR FOR A WEEK.
I WARNED YOU THE DAY I MET YOU, HOT STUFF...
...NEW RULES.
HOW ARE YOU BACK FROM THE DEAD?
WAIT, NEVER MIND.

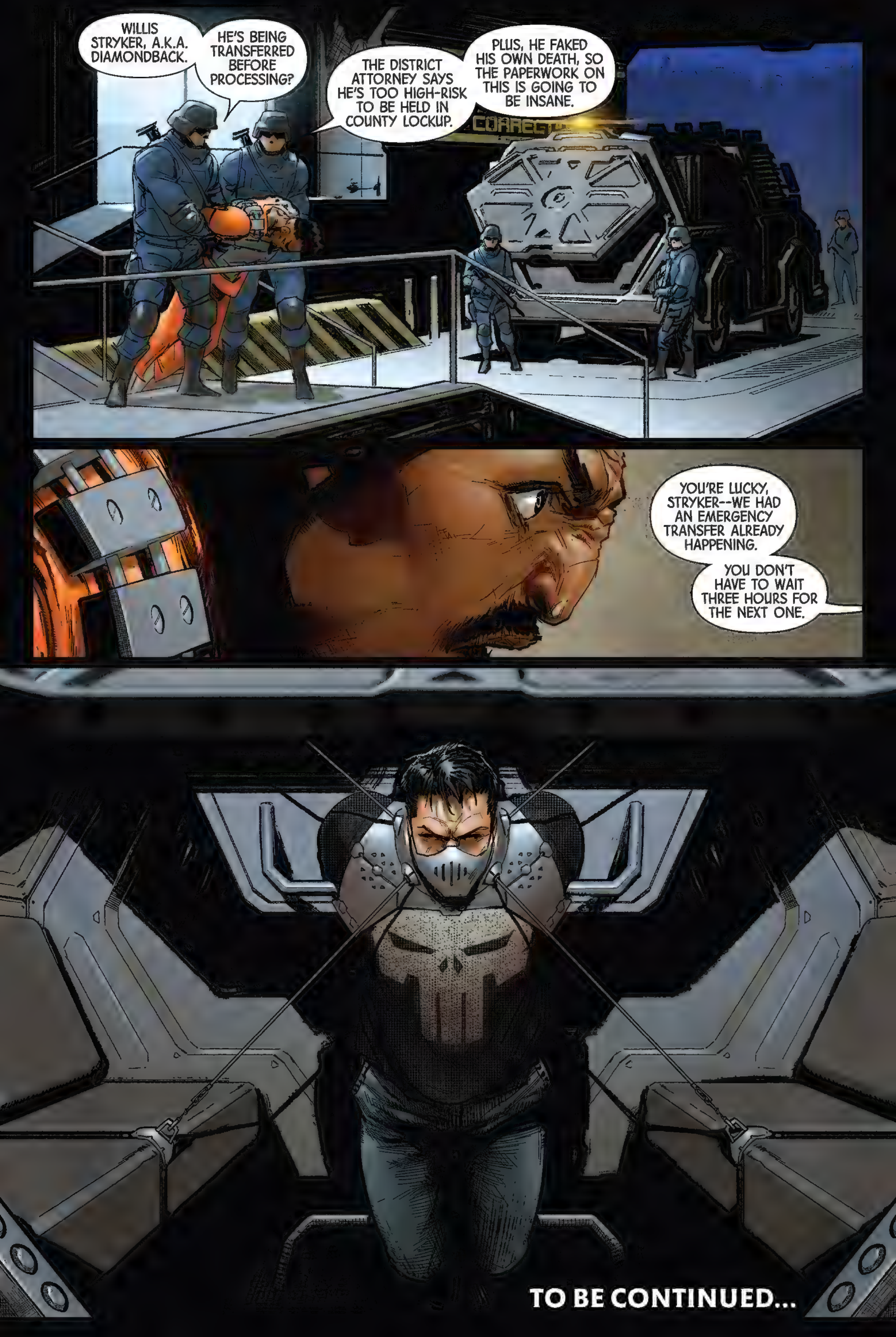

BOOM
WHY "NEVER"-- *AGH!*
SMASHH
OH, GOOD, DANNY IS OKAY!
OH, GREAT, HE JUST TOTALED WHAT WAS LEFT OF *MY* CAR.
YOU ARE A TOUGH *HOMBRE*, IRON FIST.
I REALLY THOUGHT I MADE MY STREET CRED ON YOU JUST THEN.
WELL, I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT...
...IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THINKING IS YOUR STRONG SUIT.
HA!




SMAACCKK
FUMP
I'M VERY GLAD YOU'RE NOT DEAD, MR. RAND.
THAT WAS SCARY.
EVERYONE GET BACK!
EVERYONE GET BACK TO THE CURB!
PLEASE GET ME TO YOUR CAR IMMEDIATELY AS I AM IN EXCRUCIATING PAIN.


GET BACK BEHIND THIS LINE!
IS YOUR BACK BROKEN?
I JUST NEED SOME TIME.
PLEASE GET ME OUT OF HERE.
EXCUSE ME!
IS THIS YOUR HANDIWORK?
YES, SIR.
MY NAME IS JESSICA JONES--I AM A LICENSED PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.
MY FRIEND DANIEL RAND OF THE *RAND* CORPORATION, WHO IS KNOWN EVERYWHERE AS THE IRON FIST, AND I WERE SITTING IN THAT PARKED CAR RIGHT OVER THERE WHEN *THIS* GENTLEMAN...
HIS NAME IS WILLIS STRYKER. HE CALLS HIMSELF DIAMONDBACK.
HE HAS POWERS, SO BE CAREFUL, AND HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INFLUX OF NEW DRUGS INTO THE COMMUNITY...
...BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.
HE ATTACKED US.
THANKS TO THESE LOVELY PEOPLE, THERE IS FOOTAGE OF THIS ATTACK FROM JUST ABOUT *EVERY* POSSIBLE ANGLE YOU CAN THINK OF.
I'M SURE IF YOU CHECK HIS POCKETS THERE IS MORE THAN ENOUGH INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE TO PUT HIM IN A HARDCORE THROW-HIM-DOWN-THE-HOLE-AND-DON'T-LET-HIM-OUT-TO-SEE-THE-LIGHT-OF-DAY PRISON.
MAYBE THERE'S ENOUGH TO PUT HIM AND HIS ORGANIZATION AWAY FOR GOOD.
I'M GOING TO GO TAKE CARE OF MY FRIEND.
IF YOU NEED ME, CALL ME, OR...
...CALL MY LAWYER, MATTHEW MURDOCK!
I NEED A STATEMENT!
YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN WRITING ALL THAT DOWN, THEN!


HEROES 4
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS
HEY, IT'S ME.
YOU OKAY? JESSICA? WHEN? WHERE?
I HAVE THE BABY.
I'M ON MY WAY.


WILLIS STRYKER, A.K.A. DIAMONDBACK.
HE'S BEING TRANSFERRED BEFORE PROCESSING?
THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY SAYS HE'S TOO HIGH-RISK TO BE HELD IN COUNTY LOCKUP.
PLUS, HE FAKED HIS OWN DEATH, SO THE PAPERWORK ON THIS IS GOING TO BE INSANE.
CORREC
YOU'RE LUCKY, STRYKER--WE HAD AN EMERGENCY TRANSFER ALREADY HAPPENING.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT THREE HOURS FOR THE NEXT ONE.
TO BE CONTINUED...

Hello, DEFENDERS readers! Welcome to the letters page! I'm Alanna Smith, assistant editor of the prestigious publication you hold in your hands. What does an assistant editor do, you ask? Well, answer letters, for one thing! (And cry over print deadlines, for another thing–but that is not relevant to the page you're looking at unless my tears are somehow splattered on your printed page. Whoops!)

Anyway, this is the spot where we answer your questions! To be honest with you, I am VERY sleepy and haven't thought of a sweet name for this page yet, so if you've got suggestions, be sure to email them to MHEROES@MARVEL.COM marked "Okay to Print." You can also send ordinary letters there, if you're the letter-sending type, and we'll answer them here, on this mysterious, unnamed page! We'll also run tweets that use the hashtags #DefendersComic and #OkToPrint, so start tweeting!

That's enough out of me–bring on the letters!

Hi, Marvel!

I was just really, really happy reading DEFENDERS #1! Such a fun read from cover to cover! Big congratulations to Mr. Bendis, David and Justin! I've read all the Bendis books, and I know this book is extra special because of Mr. Bendis' "babies," Daredevil, Luke and Jessica! I'm really excited to see what you guys have in store for Danny Rand! To Mr. David Marquez, FANTASTIC JOB on the art! This will stand the test of time! Can't wait to read more!

Jiggy Cruz

You've read all the Bendis books, Jiggy? When do you have time to sleep?! Glad you're reading THIS Bendis book (who needs sleep, anyway?) and hope it lives up to your expectations!

Ever since I knew about the Defenders Netflix series coming out, I was excited to see whether a comic book about it was already here–but, to my disappointment, there wasn't one. Then I realized that it was actually in the works! There was tons of promotional art on Instagram, and it got me more excited for the release. I waited constantly until, one fine day, I saw the upcoming comics on Marvel's official YouTube channel!

I'm glad to say that, after finally reading this comic, it's amazing. I love the fact that Luke Cage is (I think) in the center of this story, and he's doing it all for Jessica! It's like a sequel to THE PULSE or THE NEW AVENGERS (which I loved). Though I'm wondering if their baby will make an appearance in this series. Thanks!

From Shirin A.
Jakarta, Indonesia

Haha, you're a marketing team's dream, Shirin! I sent this over to the people who work on our Instagram and YouTube promotions, and they just put on sunglasses and rolled away on Segways, firing finger guns at me and hissing "marketing in action…marketing…in…action…"
So I think you made them very happy. And don't worry, Luke Cage will continue to be front and center (he's Brian's FAVORITE), and I'm sure Danielle the Littlest Defender will show up at some point.

Yo, DEFENDERS crew,

Man…after one issue, I can already tell this isn't going to be your ordinary comic book. I know Marvel is serious about a book when they put a team together like Brian Michael Bendis, David Marquez and Justin Ponsor. And I feel like DEFENDERS is right in your collective wheelhouse. Love the nuance–Jess drinking a beer, Danny drinking a water and Daredevil fighting a bar. All is as it should be. Haha!

Great job, everyone. The Defenders hype is real.

Ben Falkenstein
Cleveland, OH

Brian, David and Justin are like peanut butter and chocolate–how did we survive before we thought to combine them? Glad you're digging it, Ben!

To BMB and the rest,

I hadn't planned on writing in to this issue, but I had to as soon as I read it. The art, the style–everything just seemed to fall together, and this is just the first issue. I liked the Dazzler Easter egg, we don't see enough of her anymore. Also, I'm a big fan of Bendis' work, and how could anyone make fun of a person with a man crush on Luke Cage? I've loved him since THE MIGHTY AVENGERS. The Pulse-style autobiography thing was a nice touch at the end. Jessica worked with Urich when she was pregnant, right? Can't wait to see where this series goes.

All the way in bonny Scotland,
Michael Burns

I think it's in Brian's contract that every book he works on has to have at least one Dazzler Easter egg. And Luke wasn't always the crazy cool badass that we know today–for a while he was just a wacky dude in a silky yellow shirt and a silver tiara. So while we can take him seriously now, it was an uphill battle to get him there! I hope, someday, that Big Bertha follows in his footsteps. (You think I'm joking but I AM NOT. Lend that girl some Luke Cage magic! She is a star waiting to be born!)

I wanted to let Brian Michael Bendis, David Marquez and Justin Ponsor know that their work on this book is phenomenal on all levels. This is by far my favorite book available right now and I'm really looking forward to issue #3! I do want to point out that nothing has brought a smile to my face while reading a comic recently like issue #2 did with the brief appearance of Blade. It's been almost a decade since this character has had a series of his own. This fact, in my opinion, is unacceptable. Let the powers that be at Marvel know that this is one fan that's hoping for that to change soon! If not, at least consider incorporating Blade more into future issues of THE DEFENDERS? Keep up the great work guys!

Adam Fardy

Hey, Adam! If you're looking for an immediate Blade fix, he appeared recently in a few issues of GWENPOOL, and he's going to be in SECRET EMPIRE: BRAVE NEW WORLD #5. As for other appearances, well…you'll have to wait and see!

Dear DEFENDERS crew,

I am a HUGE Marvel fan and try not to miss out on a single thing, so when I found out that Daredevil, Iron Fist, Luke Cage and Jessica Jones were teaming up in the Netflix show, I was excited–and when I read the first issues of DEFENDERS, I got even more excited about the comic than the show. I am familiar with the work you guys did in the MILES MORALES comics and I hope I will love the DEFENDERS comics as much as those. Great work.

Sincerely,
Asher Tewodros

I was going to make a coy remark about how you may see Miles swinging through these pages sooner than you think, and then I realized that I was talking about THIS issue and felt very silly. So that's where I'm at, Asher.

Hi, Marvel!

Just wanted to say, as a big fan from the last 17 years (currently 21 years old), thanks so much for bringing a new series of DEFENDERS back again. Feels like forever since the last HEROES FOR HIRE, and this DEFENDERS ongoing series definitely seems to be an awesome one. Funny story, thanks to these characters specifically, I met one of the most–if not THE most–awesome girl ever, Emy! We started talking about the DAREDEVIL series and she currently has the very first issue of the latest POWER MAN AND IRON FIST, though her favorite one is Daredevil. I will keep her up-to-date with the DEFENDERS comic. Wondering if we will ever get to see a Punisher fight against Iron Fist? That will be interesting–hopefully Danny would win? Who knows! Anyway, thanks for all the awesome content you guys create.

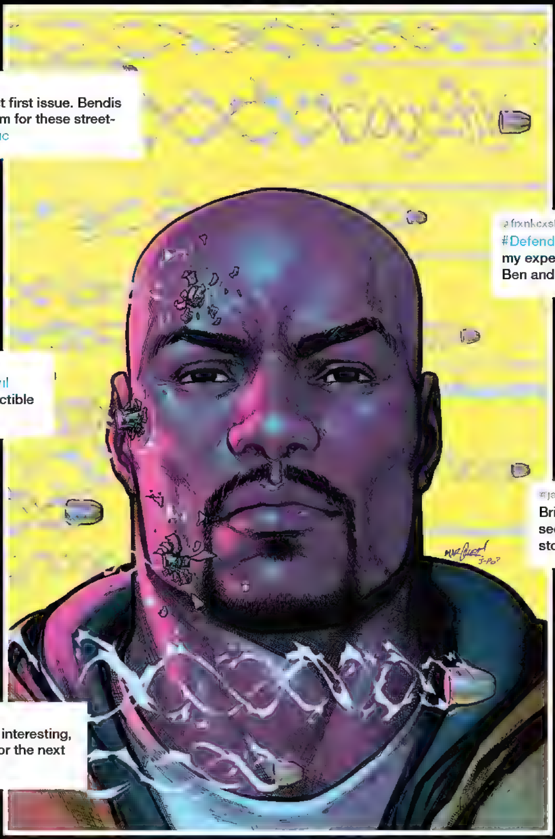
Sincerely,
Ivo Monge

Hey, Ivo! It's awesome that you made a friend through characters who punch a lot of people. That's the way to do it, if you ask me! And I hope we get to see a Punisher vs. Iron Fist fight, though I'm not sure who I'd bet on. Usually it's a bad idea to bring a fist to a gunfight…but if you're Iron Fist, maybe you can get away with it?

That's all we've got space for this month! Keep sending in your tweets and letters and we'll keep running them. Come back next month to see what happens when you put Diamondback and the Punisher together in a tiny van…

-Honorary Defender Alanna Smith

NEXT!



@m_perljam
DEFENDERS #1 was a perfect first issue. Bendis and Marquez are the only team for these street-level heroes. #Defenderscomic

@frxnkcxstle
#Defenderscomic this issue absolutely exceeded my expections! I LOVE it! The interview between Ben and Luke was such a nice touch

@Skyward_Link
Love #JessicaJones #Daredevil & #Daredevil kicking a** is so cool! & the almost indestructible #LukeCage #Defenderscomic

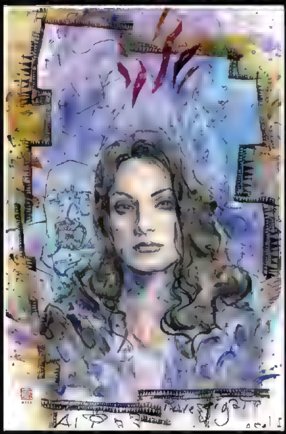
@jaro61
Brilliant start to DEFENDERS. Looking forward to seeing what this great creative team has got in store #Defenderscomic

@ayyitsphilzzy
The interview of Luke Cage was really interesting, the images were too good can't wait for the next issue #Defenderscomic

DEFENDERS #5

ALL ON SALE THIS MONTH!

LUKE CAGE #4



JESSICA JONES #11

DAREDEVIL #25

IRON FIST #6

We want to hear from you! Send your letters to MHEROES@MARVEL.COM marked "OKAY TO PRINT," or tweet us using the hashtags #DefendersComic and #OKtoprint for a chance to see your tweet printed in future issues!

MARVEL

DAREDEVIL · LUKE CAGE · JESSICA JONES · IRON FIST

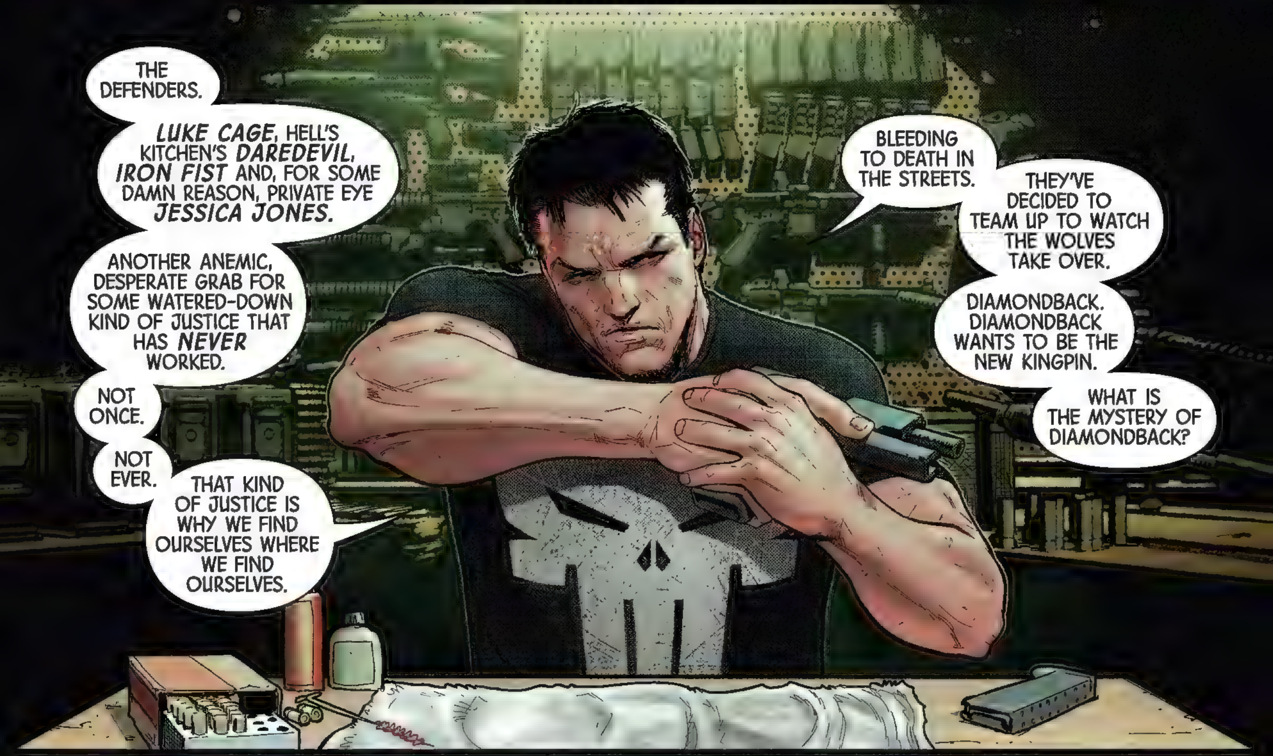
THE DEFENDERS™

#5

BENDIS
MARQUEZ
PONSOR

MARQUEZ!
J-PO?

THE DEFENDERS


THE DEFENDERS.
LUKE CAGE, HELL'S KITCHEN'S DAREDEVIL, IRON FIST AND, FOR SOME DAMN REASON, PRIVATE EYE JESSICA JONES.
ANOTHER ANEMIC, DESPERATE GRAB FOR SOME WATERED-DOWN KIND OF JUSTICE THAT HAS NEVER WORKED.
NOT ONCE.
NOT EVER.
THAT KIND OF JUSTICE IS WHY WE FIND OURSELVES WHERE WE FIND OURSELVES.
BLEEDING TO DEATH IN THE STREETS.
THEY'VE DECIDED TO TEAM UP TO WATCH THE WOLVES TAKE OVER.
DIAMONDBACK. DIAMONDBACK WANTS TO BE THE NEW KINGPIN.
WHAT IS THE MYSTERY OF DIAMONDBACK?

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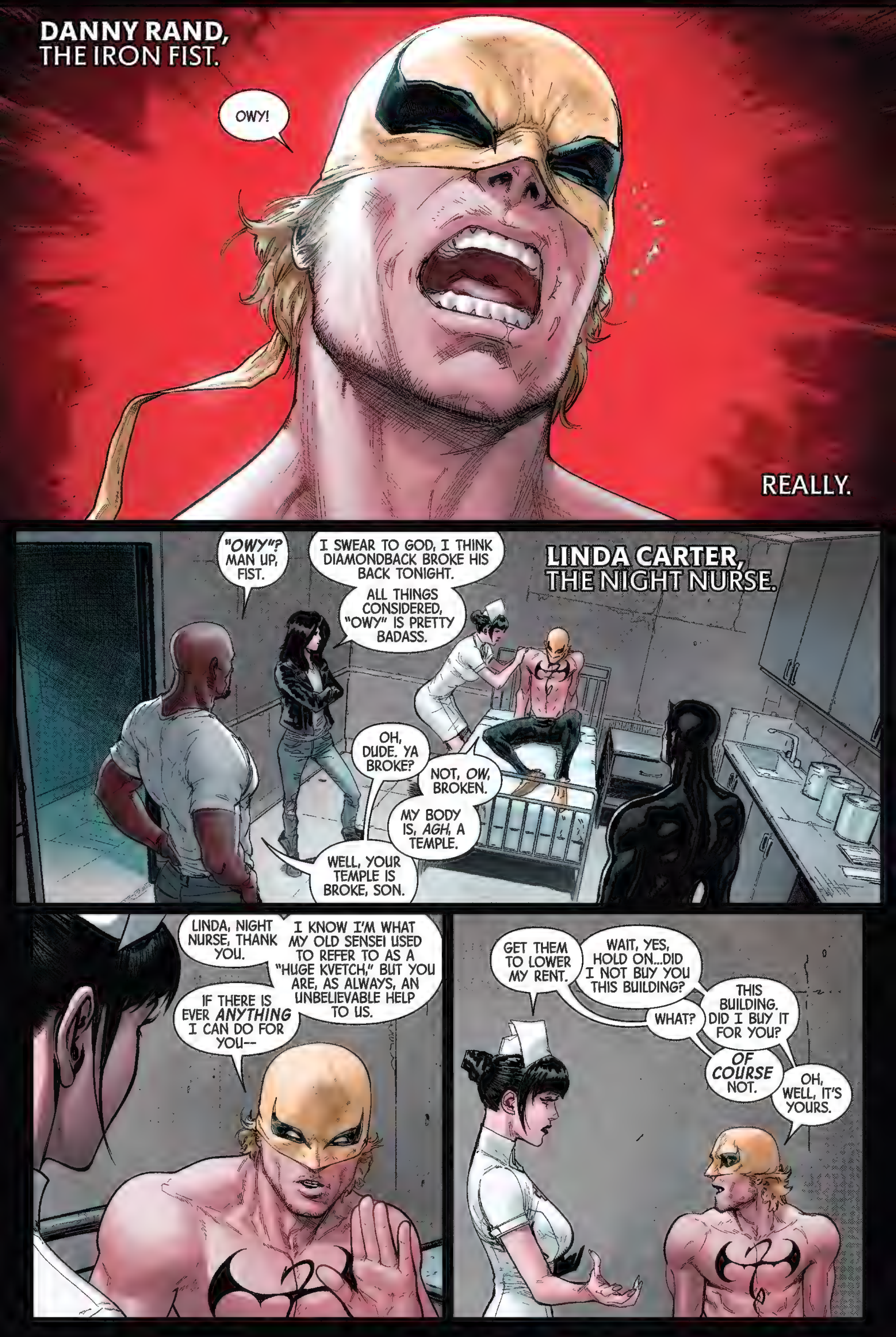
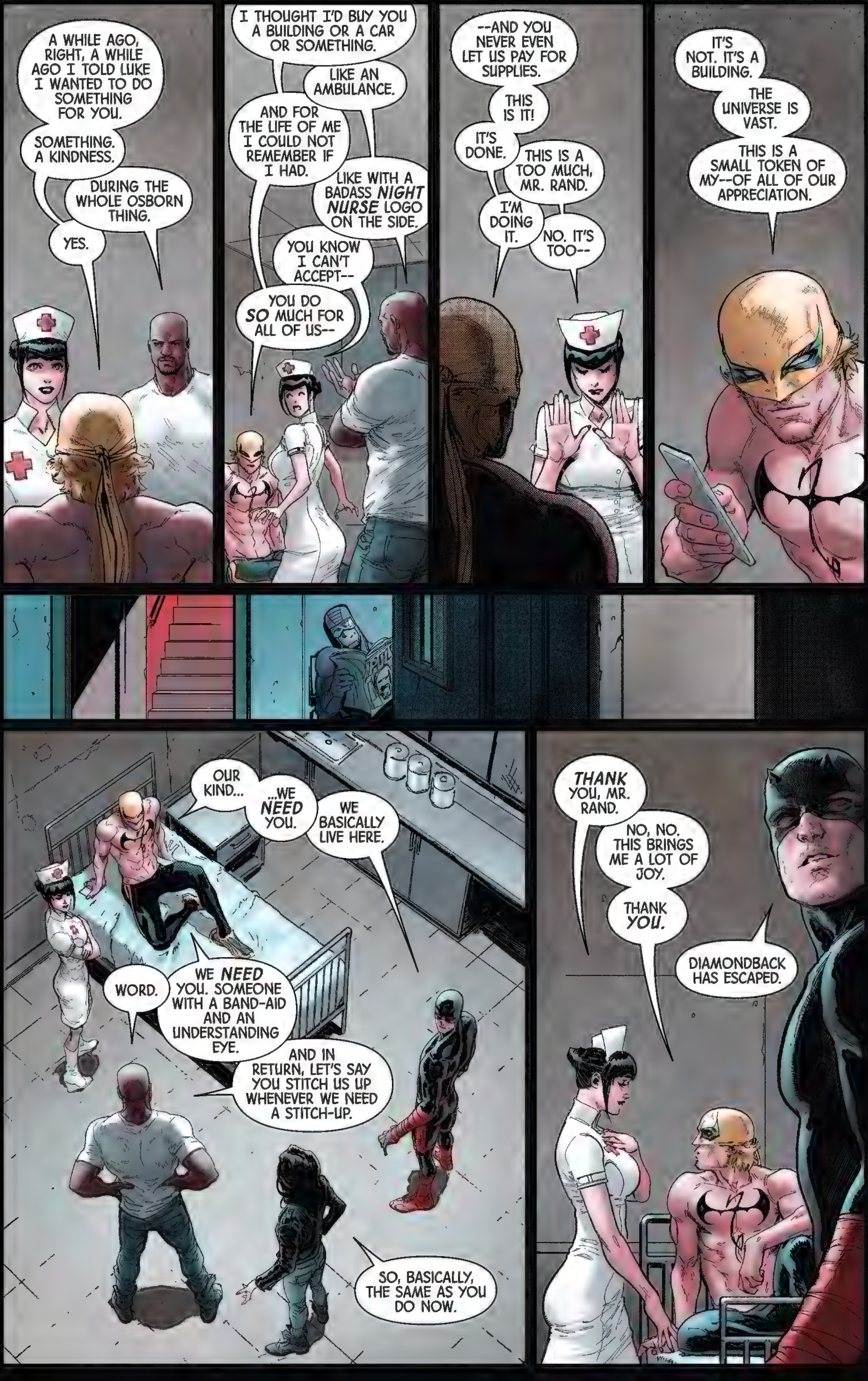
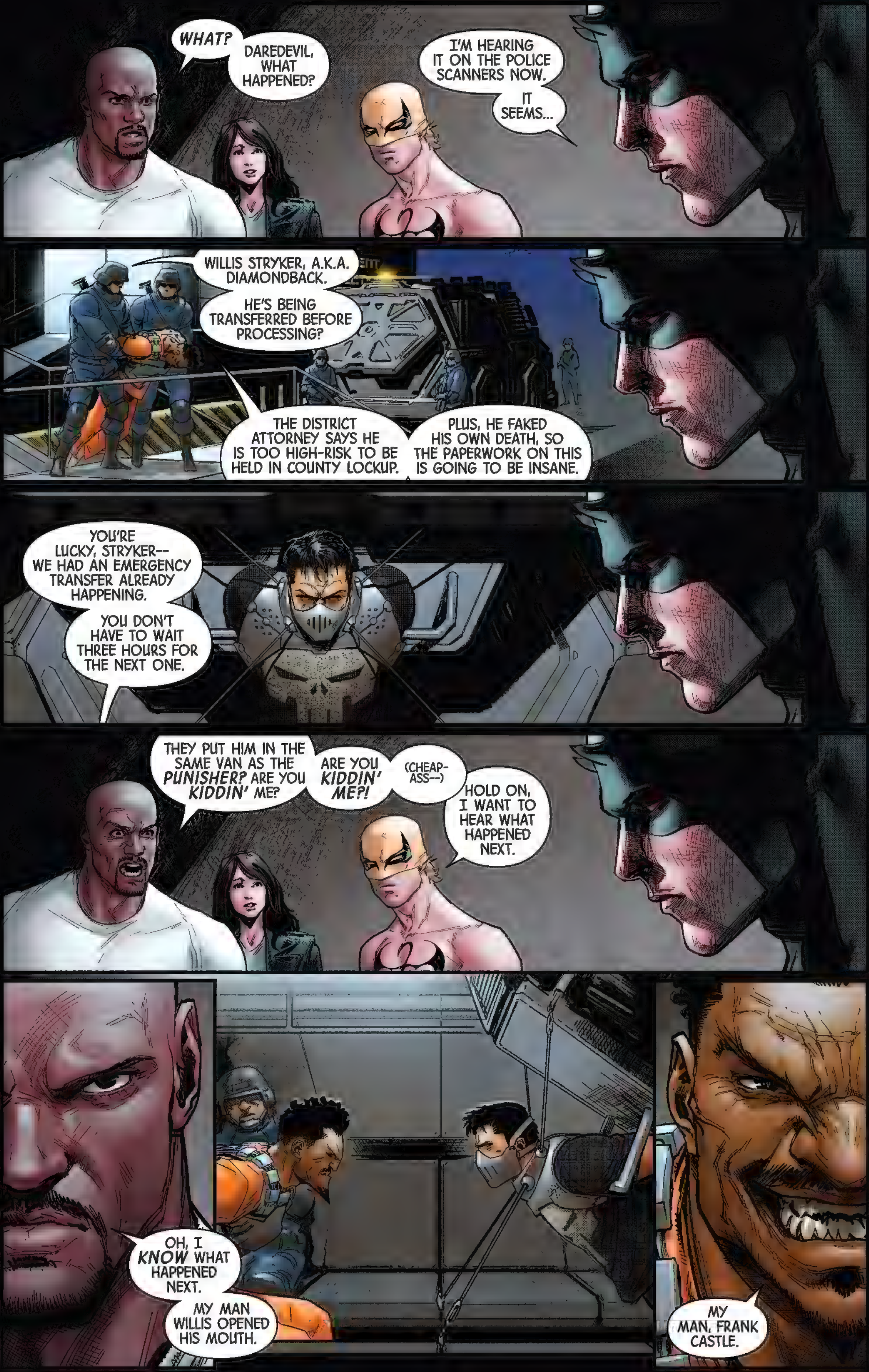
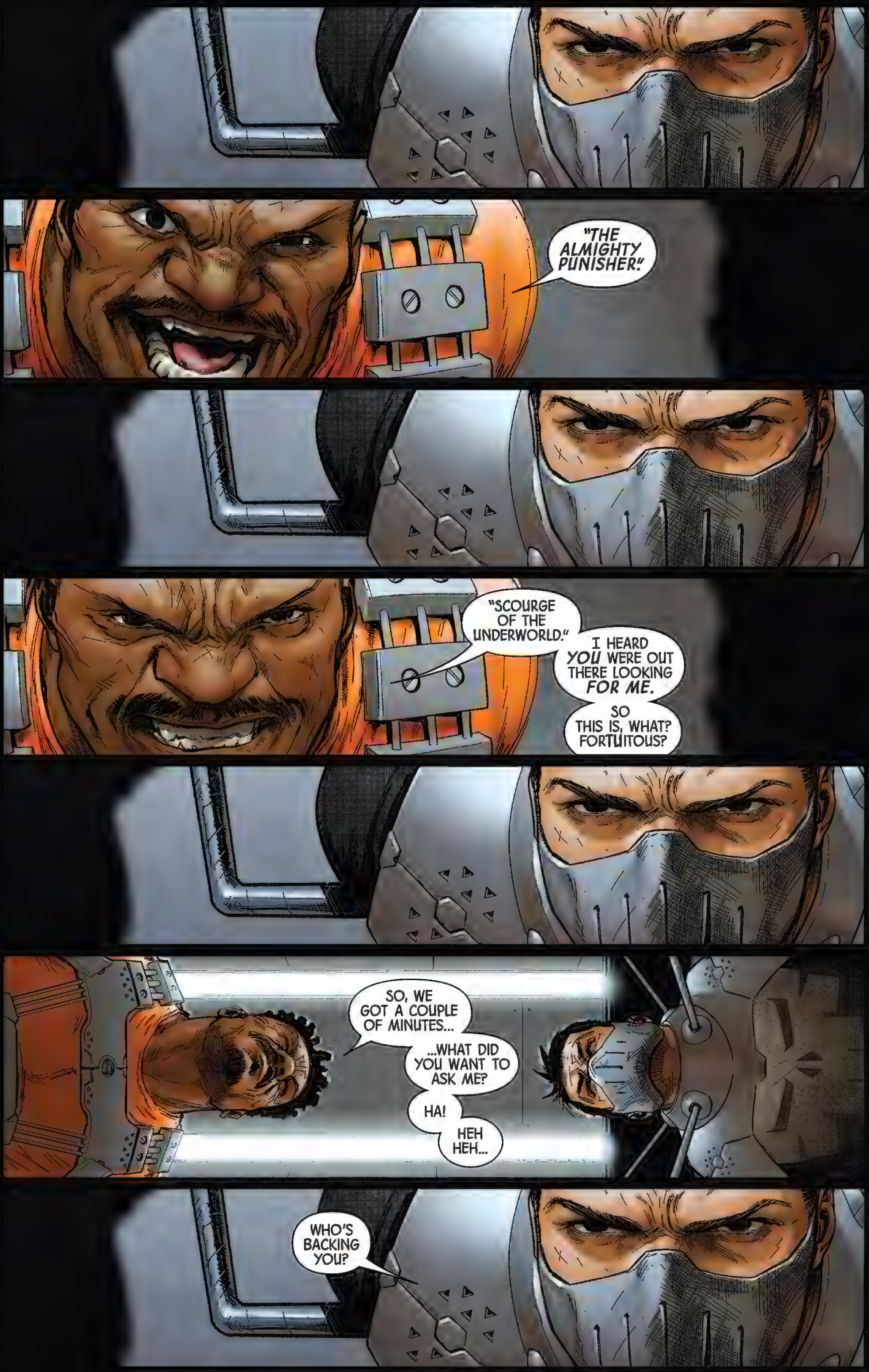
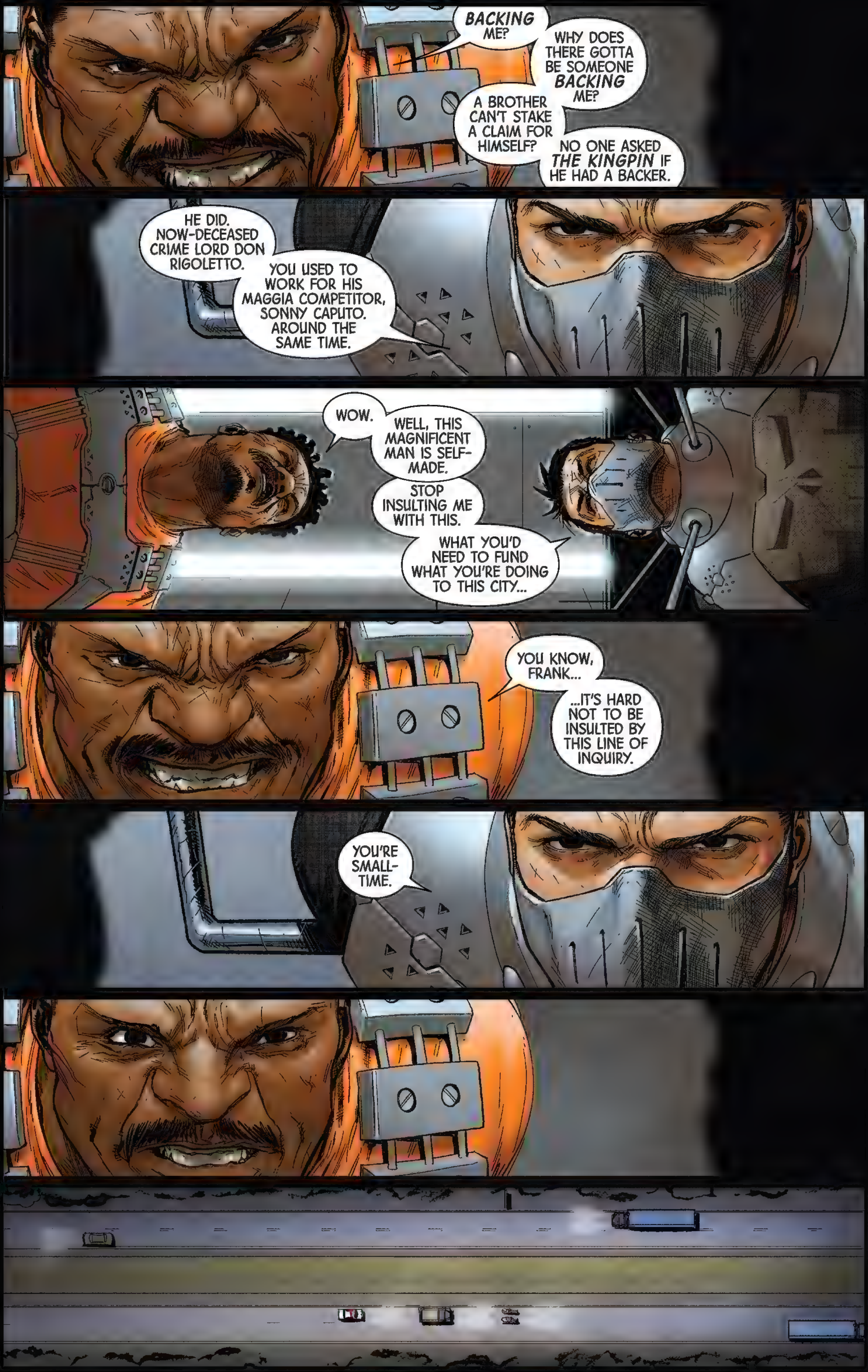
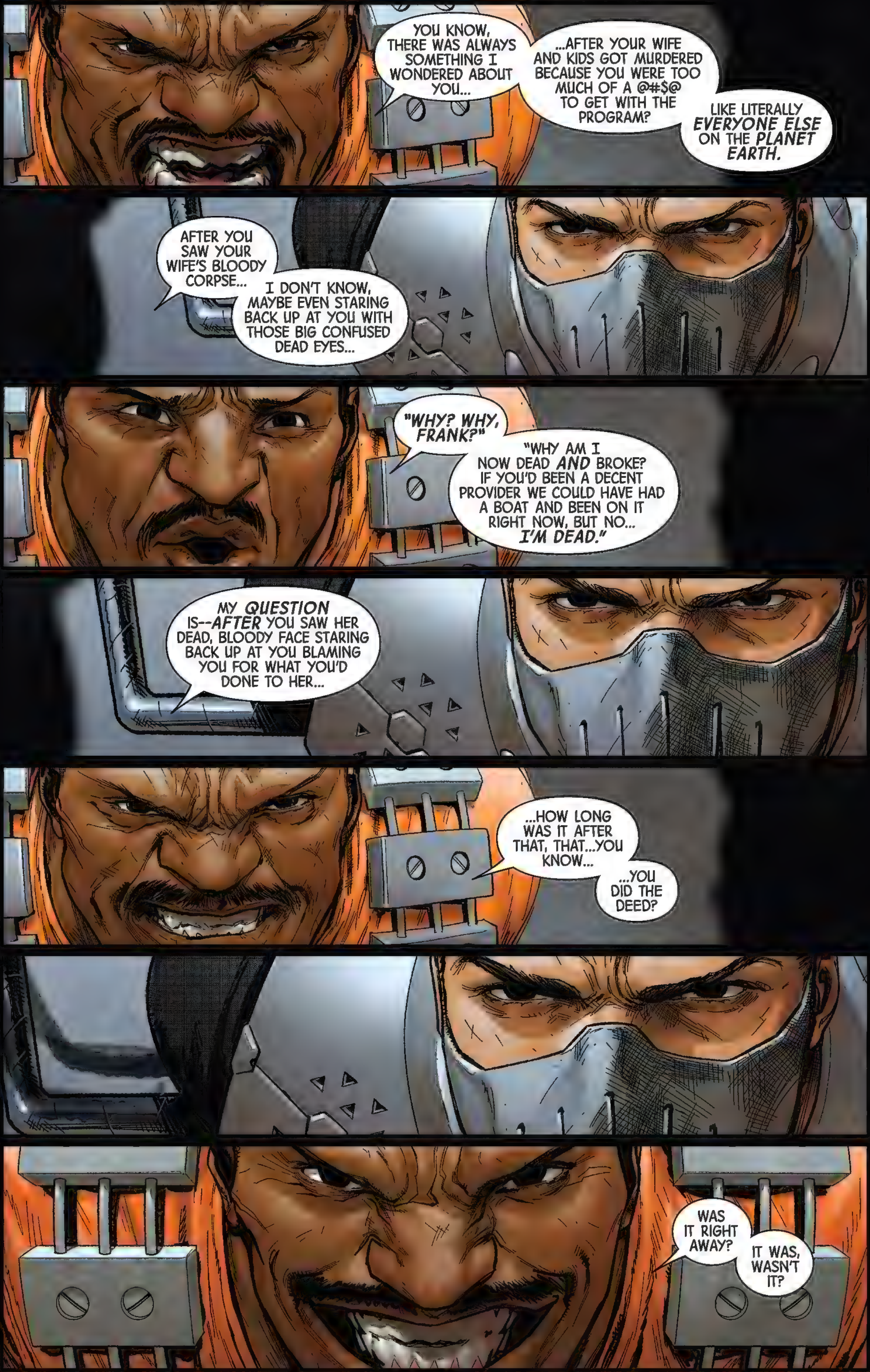

DANNY RAND, THE IRON FIST.
OWY!
REALLY.
"OWY"? MAN UP, FIST.
I SWEAR TO GOD, I THINK DIAMONDBACK BROKE HIS BACK TONIGHT.
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, "OWY" IS PRETTY BADASS.
LINDA CARTER, THE NIGHT NURSE.
OH, DUDE. YA BROKE?
NOT, OW, BROKEN.
MY BODY IS, AGH, A TEMPLE.
WELL, YOUR TEMPLE IS BROKE, SON.
LINDA, NIGHT NURSE, THANK YOU.
I KNOW I'M WHAT MY OLD SENSEI USED TO REFER TO AS A "HUGE KVETCH," BUT YOU ARE, AS ALWAYS, AN UNBELIEVABLE HELP TO US.
IF THERE IS EVER ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU--
GET THEM TO LOWER MY RENT.
WAIT, YES, HOLD ON...DID I NOT BUY YOU THIS BUILDING?
WHAT?
THIS BUILDING. DID I BUY IT FOR YOU?
OF COURSE NOT.
OH, WELL, IT'S YOURS.

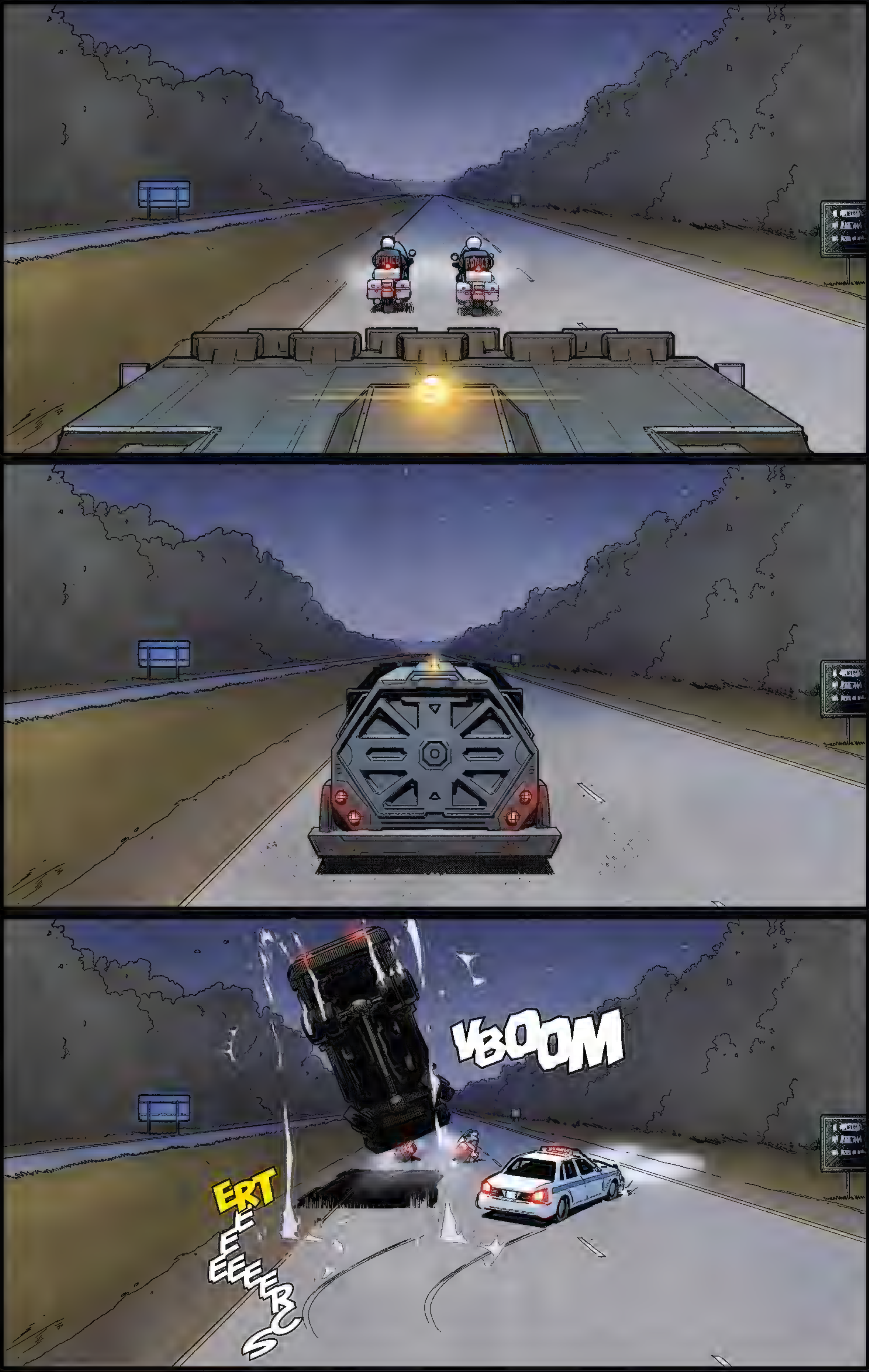

A WHILE AGO, RIGHT, A WHILE AGO I TOLD LUKE I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOU.
SOMETHING. A KINDNESS.
DURING THE WHOLE OSBORN THING.
YES.
I THOUGHT I'D BUY YOU A BUILDING OR A CAR OR SOMETHING.
LIKE AN AMBULANCE.
AND FOR THE LIFE OF ME I COULD NOT REMEMBER IF I HAD.
LIKE WITH A BADASS *NIGHT NURSE* LOGO ON THE SIDE.
YOU KNOW I CAN'T ACCEPT--
YOU DO *SO* MUCH FOR ALL OF US--
--AND YOU NEVER EVEN LET US PAY FOR SUPPLIES.
THIS IS IT!
IT'S DONE.
THIS IS A TOO MUCH, MR. RAND.
I'M DOING IT.
NO. IT'S TOO--
IT'S NOT. IT'S A BUILDING.
THE UNIVERSE IS VAST.
THIS IS A SMALL TOKEN OF MY--OF ALL OF OUR APPRECIATION.
OUR KIND...
...WE *NEED* YOU.
WE BASICALLY LIVE HERE.
WORD.
WE *NEED* YOU. SOMEONE WITH A BAND-AID AND AN UNDERSTANDING EYE.
AND IN RETURN, LET'S SAY YOU STITCH US UP WHENEVER WE NEED A STITCH-UP.
SO, BASICALLY, THE SAME AS YOU DO NOW.
THANK YOU, MR. RAND.
NO, NO. THIS BRINGS ME A LOT OF JOY.
THANK *YOU.*
DIAMONDBACK HAS ESCAPED.

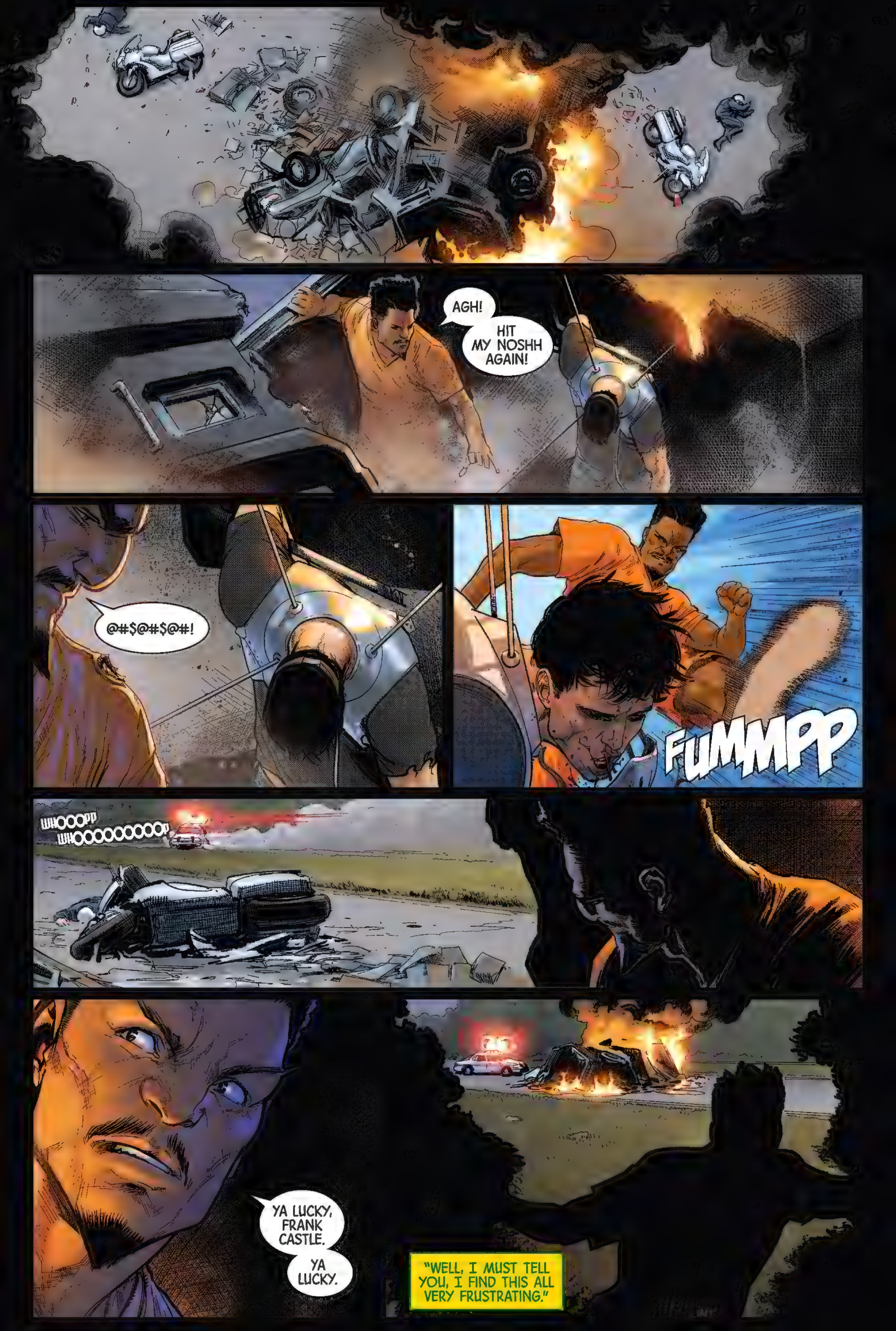

WHAT?
DAREDEVIL, WHAT HAPPENED?
I'M HEARING IT ON THE POLICE SCANNERS NOW.
IT SEEMS...
WILLIS STRYKER, A.K.A. DIAMONDBACK.
HE'S BEING TRANSFERRED BEFORE PROCESSING?
THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY SAYS HE IS TOO HIGH-RISK TO BE HELD IN COUNTY LOCKUP.
PLUS, HE FAKED HIS OWN DEATH, SO THE PAPERWORK ON THIS IS GOING TO BE INSANE.
YOU'RE LUCKY, STRYKER-- WE HAD AN EMERGENCY TRANSFER ALREADY HAPPENING.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT THREE HOURS FOR THE NEXT ONE.
THEY PUT HIM IN THE SAME VAN AS THE PUNISHER? ARE YOU KIDDIN' ME?
ARE YOU KIDDIN' ME?!
(CHEAP-ASS--)
HOLD ON, I WANT TO HEAR WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.
OH, I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.
MY MAN WILLIS OPENED HIS MOUTH.
MY MAN, FRANK CASTLE.

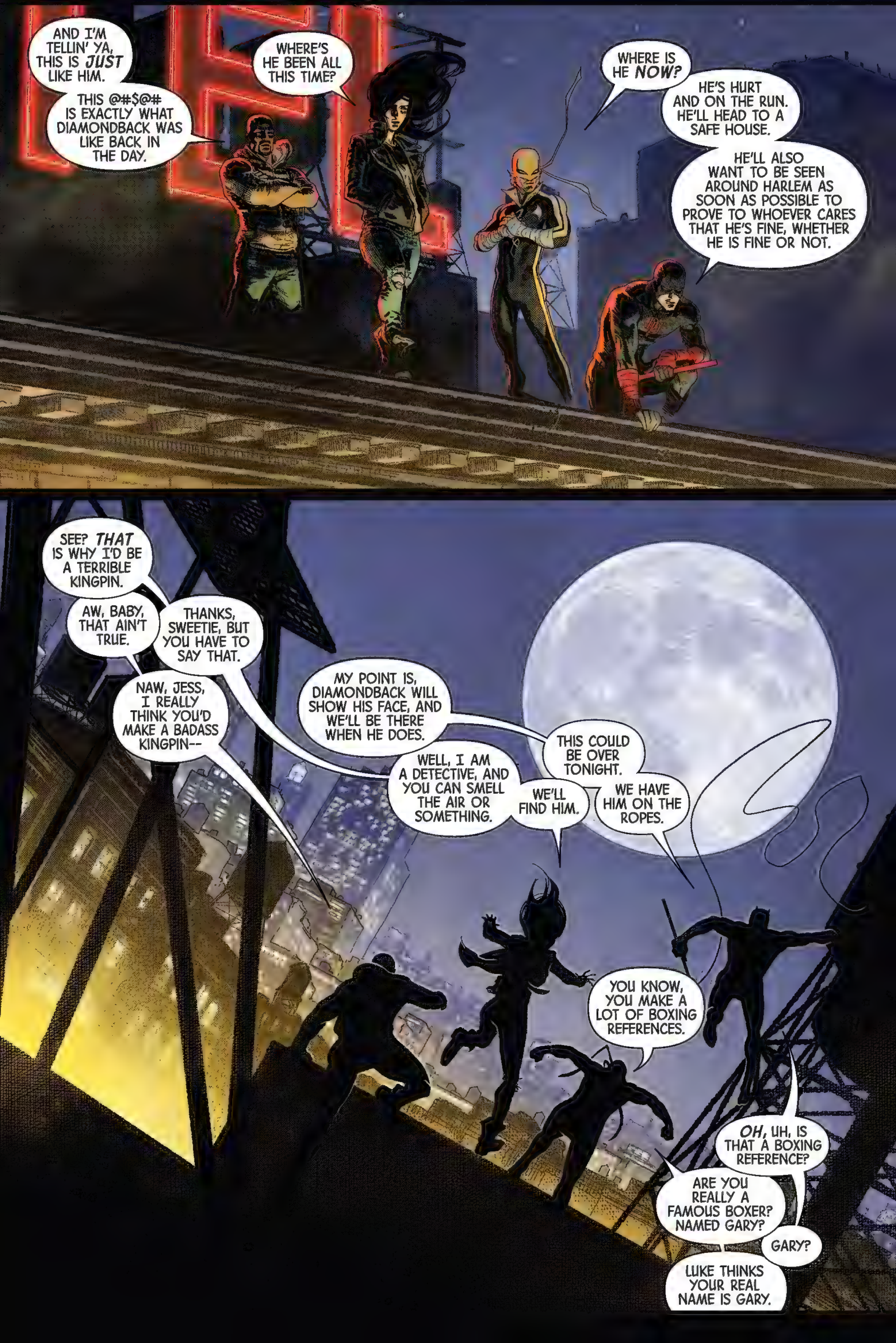

"THE ALMIGHTY PUNISHER."
"SCOURGE OF THE UNDERWORLD."
I HEARD YOU WERE OUT THERE LOOKING FOR ME.
SO THIS IS, WHAT? FORTUITOUS?
SO, WE GOT A COUPLE OF MINUTES...
...WHAT DID YOU WANT TO ASK ME?
HA!
HEH HEH...
WHO'S BACKING YOU?

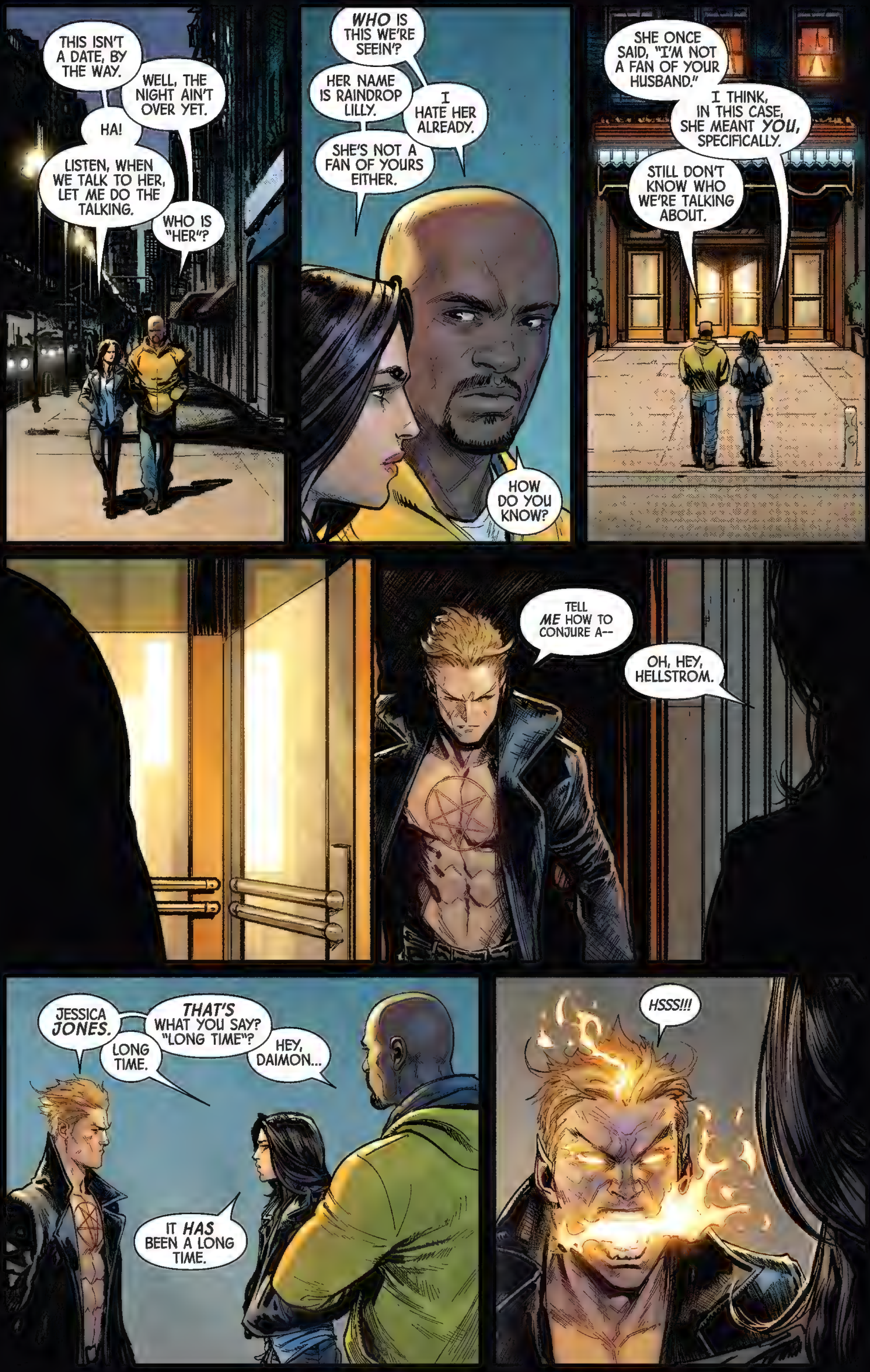

BACKING ME?
WHY DOES THERE GOTTA BE SOMEONE BACKING ME?
A BROTHER CAN'T STAKE A CLAIM FOR HIMSELF?
NO ONE ASKED THE KINGPIN IF HE HAD A BACKER.
HE DID. NOW-DECEASED CRIME LORD DON RIGOLETTO.
YOU USED TO WORK FOR HIS MAGGIA COMPETITOR, SONNY CAPUTO. AROUND THE SAME TIME.
WOW.
WELL, THIS MAGNIFICENT MAN IS SELF-MADE.
STOP INSULTING ME WITH THIS.
WHAT YOU'D NEED TO FUND WHAT YOU'RE DOING TO THIS CITY...
YOU KNOW, FRANK...
...IT'S HARD NOT TO BE INSULTED BY THIS LINE OF INQUIRY.
YOU'RE SMALL-TIME.

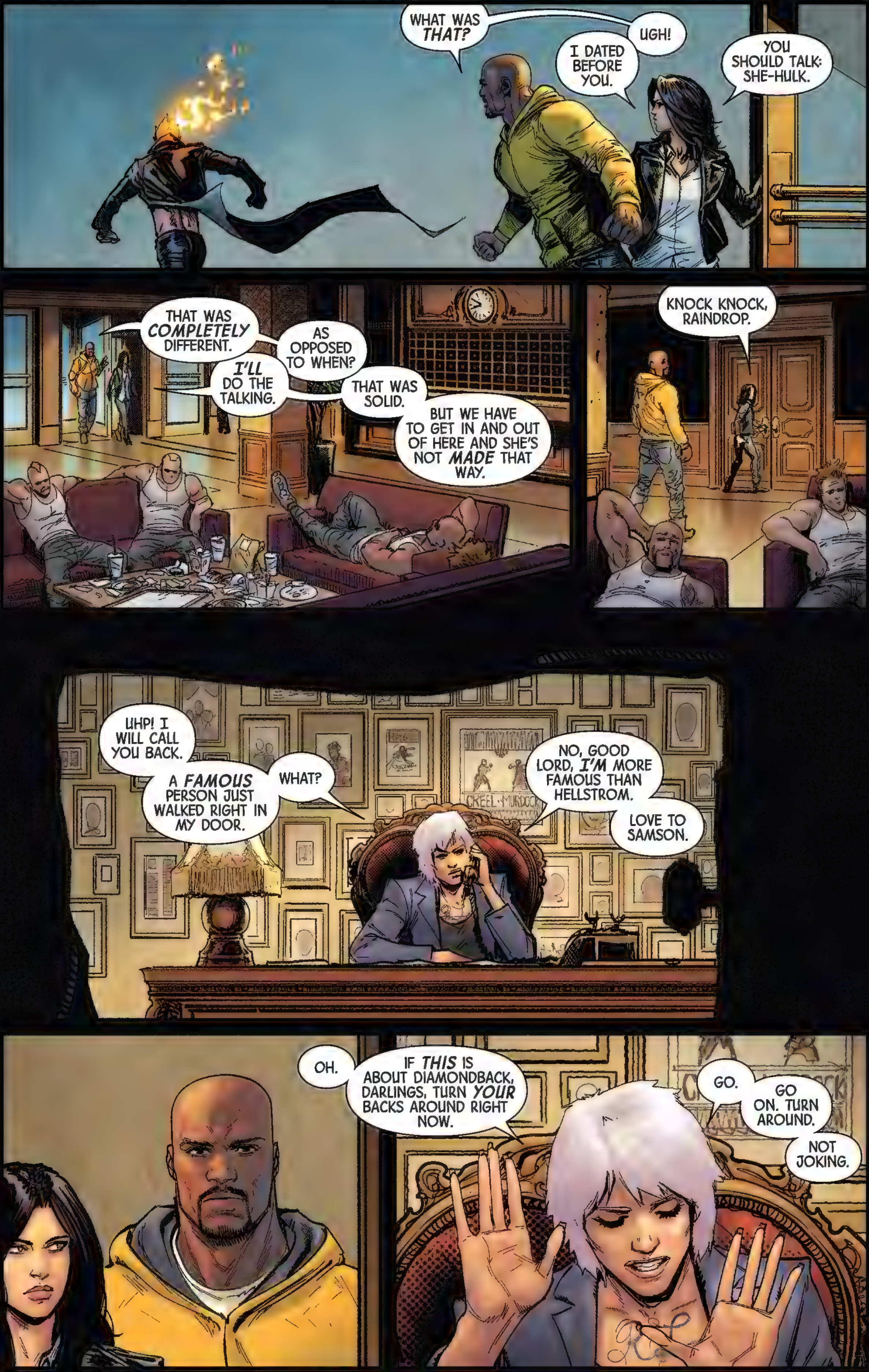

YOU KNOW, THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING I WONDERED ABOUT YOU...
...AFTER YOUR WIFE AND KIDS GOT MURDERED BECAUSE YOU WERE TOO MUCH OF A @#$@ TO GET WITH THE PROGRAM?
LIKE LITERALLY *EVERYONE ELSE* ON THE *PLANET EARTH.*
AFTER YOU SAW YOUR WIFE'S BLOODY CORPSE...
I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE EVEN STARING BACK UP AT YOU WITH THOSE BIG CONFUSED DEAD EYES...
"WHY? WHY, FRANK?"
"WHY AM I NOW DEAD *AND* BROKE? IF YOU'D BEEN A DECENT PROVIDER WE COULD HAVE HAD A BOAT AND BEEN ON IT RIGHT NOW, BUT NO... *I'M DEAD."*
MY *QUESTION* IS--*AFTER* YOU SAW HER DEAD, BLOODY FACE STARING BACK UP AT YOU BLAMING YOU FOR WHAT YOU'D DONE TO HER...
...HOW LONG WAS IT AFTER THAT, THAT...YOU KNOW...
...YOU DID THE DEED?
WAS IT RIGHT AWAY?
IT WAS, WASN'T IT?

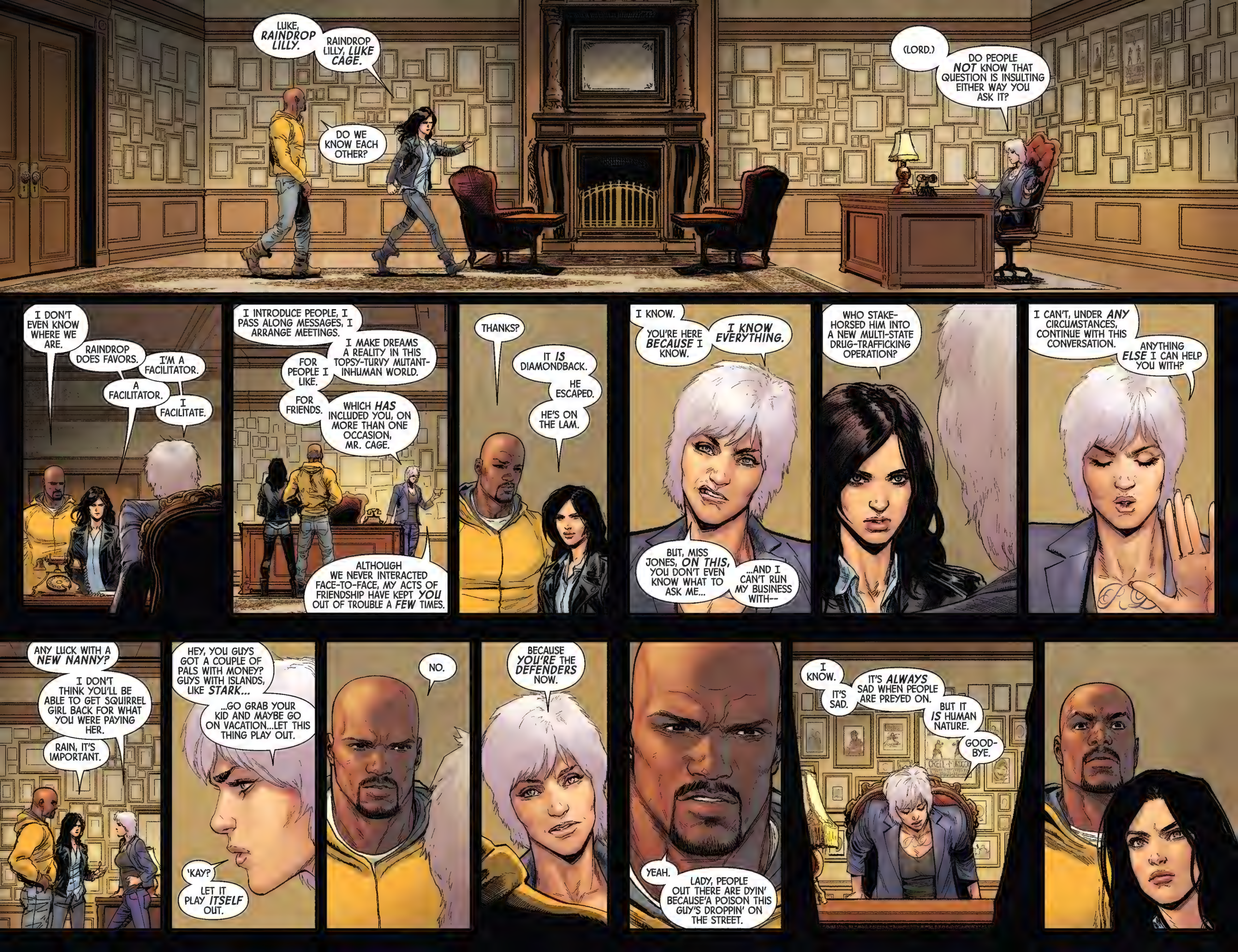

POLICE
POLICE
VBOOM
SCREEEEEEERT

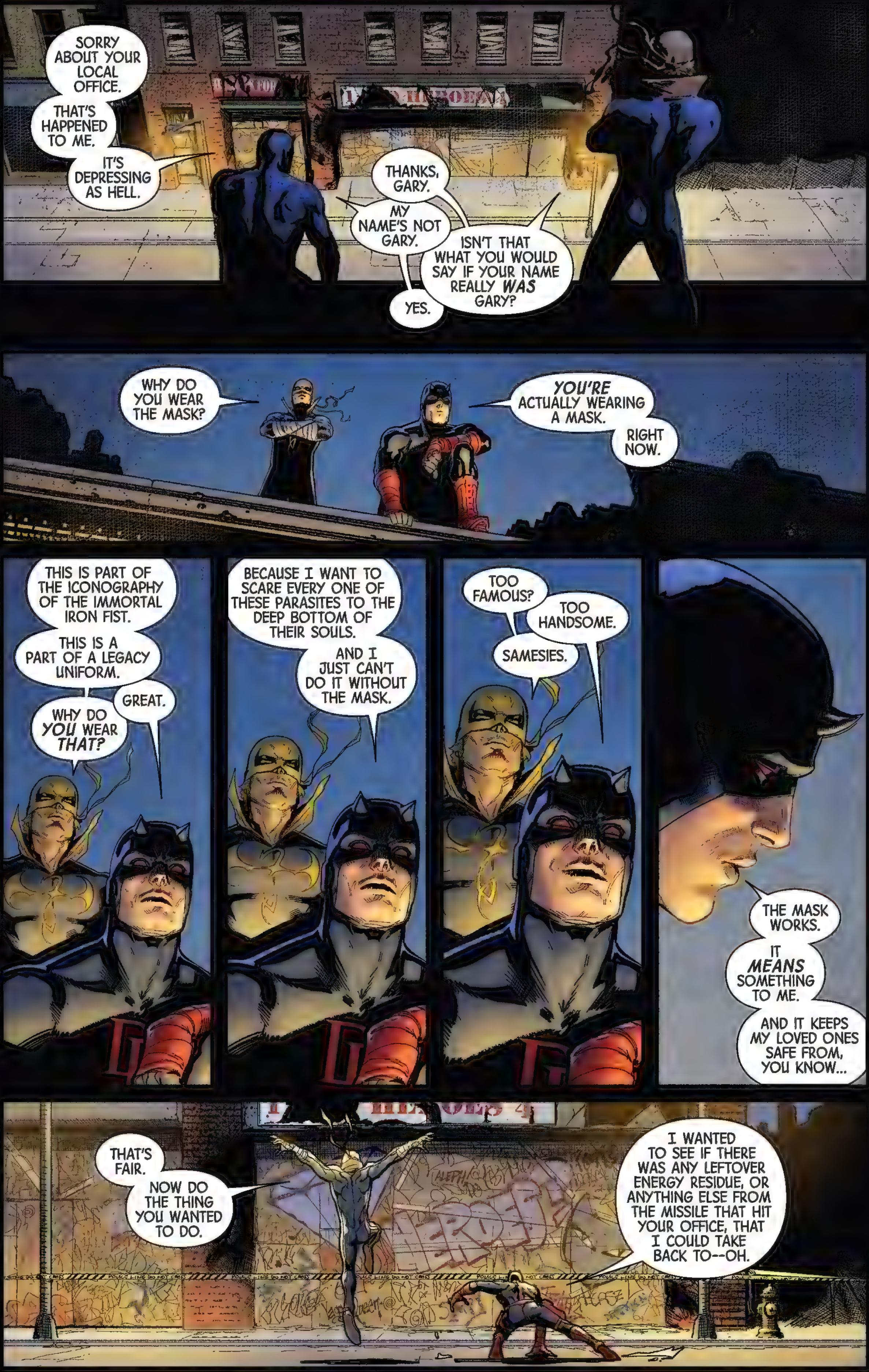

AGH!
HIT MY NOSHH AGAIN!
@#$@#$@#!
FUMMPP
WHOOOPP
WHOOOOOOOOOP
YA LUCKY, FRANK CASTLE.
YA LUCKY.
"WELL, I MUST TELL YOU, I FIND THIS ALL VERY FRUSTRATING."

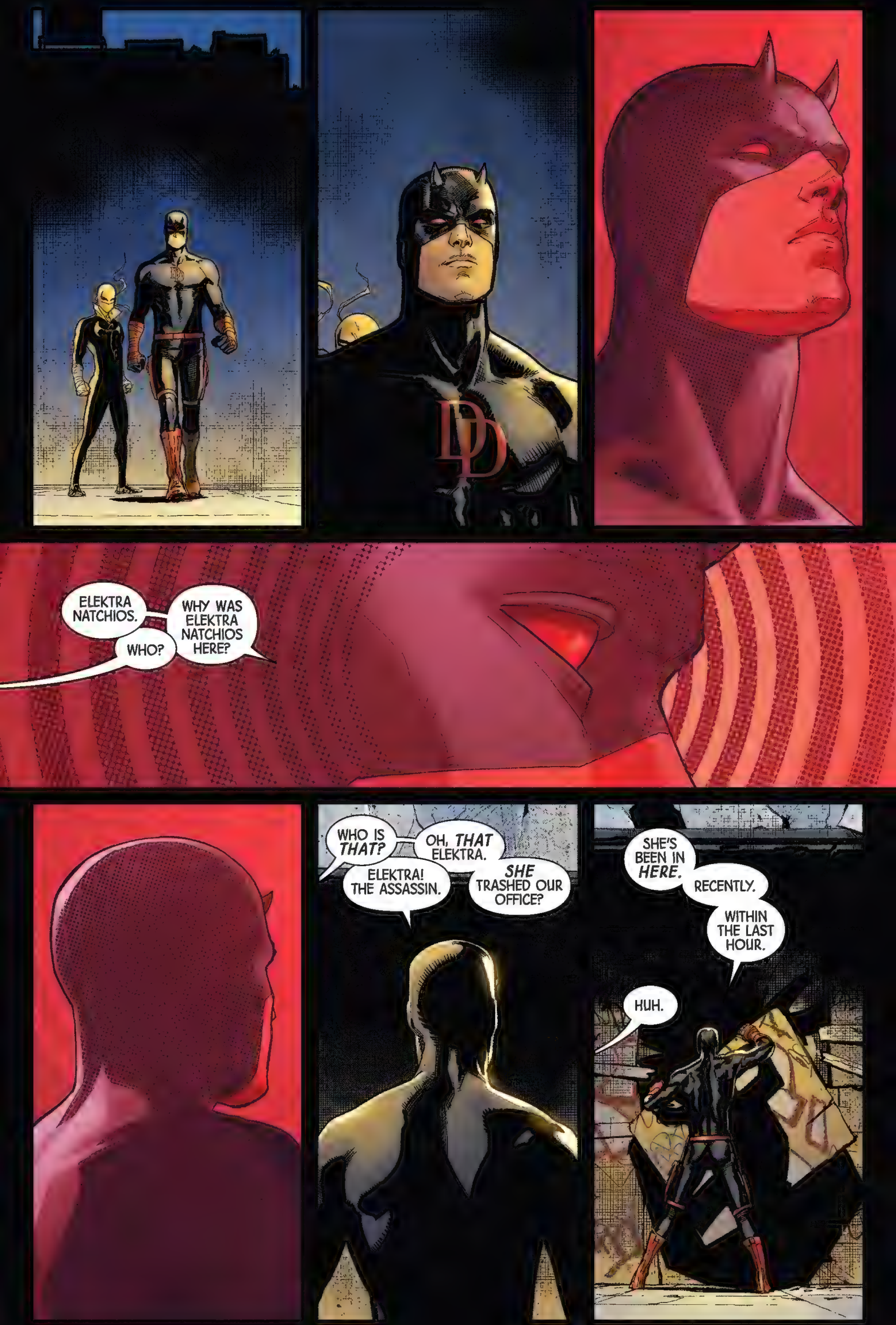

AND I'M TELLIN' YA, THIS IS *JUST* LIKE HIM.
THIS @#$@# IS EXACTLY WHAT DIAMONDBACK WAS LIKE BACK IN THE DAY.
WHERE'S HE BEEN ALL THIS TIME?
WHERE IS HE *NOW?*
HE'S HURT AND ON THE RUN. HE'LL HEAD TO A SAFE HOUSE.
HE'LL ALSO WANT TO BE SEEN AROUND HARLEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO PROVE TO WHOEVER CARES THAT HE'S FINE, WHETHER HE IS FINE OR NOT.
SEE? *THAT* IS WHY I'D BE A TERRIBLE KINGPIN.
AW, BABY, THAT AIN'T TRUE.
THANKS, SWEETIE, BUT YOU HAVE TO SAY THAT.
NAW, JESS, I REALLY THINK YOU'D MAKE A BADASS KINGPIN--
MY POINT IS, DIAMONDBACK WILL SHOW HIS FACE, AND WE'LL BE THERE WHEN HE DOES.
WELL, I AM A DETECTIVE, AND YOU CAN SMELL THE AIR OR SOMETHING.
THIS COULD BE OVER TONIGHT.
WE'LL FIND HIM.
WE HAVE HIM ON THE ROPES.
YOU KNOW, YOU MAKE A LOT OF BOXING REFERENCES.
OH, UH, IS THAT A BOXING REFERENCE?
ARE YOU REALLY A FAMOUS BOXER? NAMED GARY?
GARY?
LUKE THINKS YOUR REAL NAME IS GARY.

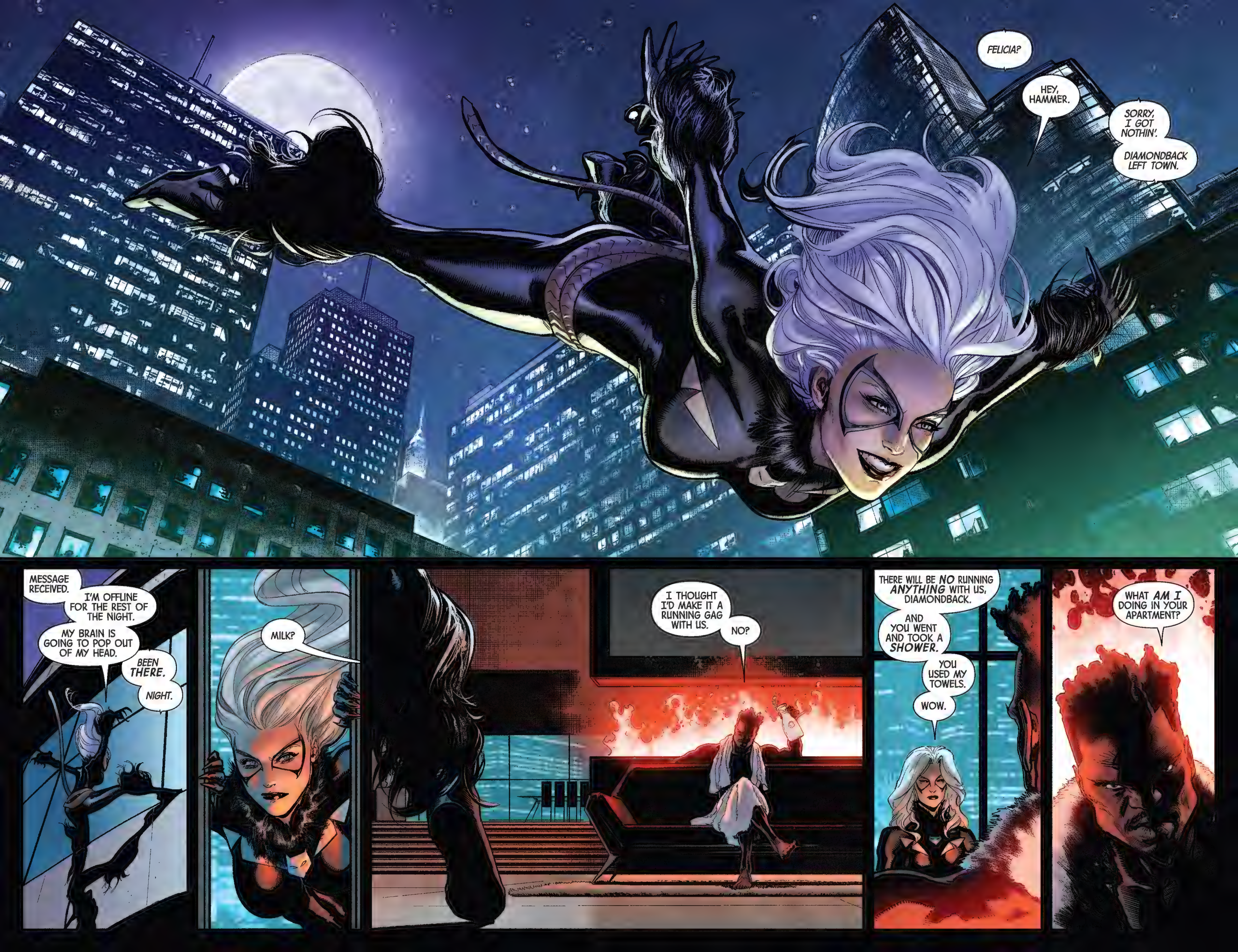

THIS ISN'T A DATE, BY THE WAY.
WELL, THE NIGHT AIN'T OVER YET.
HA!
LISTEN, WHEN WE TALK TO HER, LET ME DO THE TALKING.
WHO IS "HER"?
WHO IS THIS WE'RE SEEIN'?
HER NAME IS RAINDROP LILLY.
I HATE HER ALREADY.
SHE'S NOT A FAN OF YOURS EITHER.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
SHE ONCE SAID, "I'M NOT A FAN OF YOUR HUSBAND."
I THINK, IN THIS CASE, SHE MEANT *YOU*, SPECIFICALLY.
STILL DON'T KNOW WHO WE'RE TALKING ABOUT.
TELL *ME* HOW TO CONJURE A--
OH, HEY, HELLSTROM.
JESSICA *JONES*.
LONG TIME.
THAT'S WHAT YOU SAY? "LONG TIME"?
HEY, DAIMON...
IT *HAS* BEEN A LONG TIME.
HSSS!!!

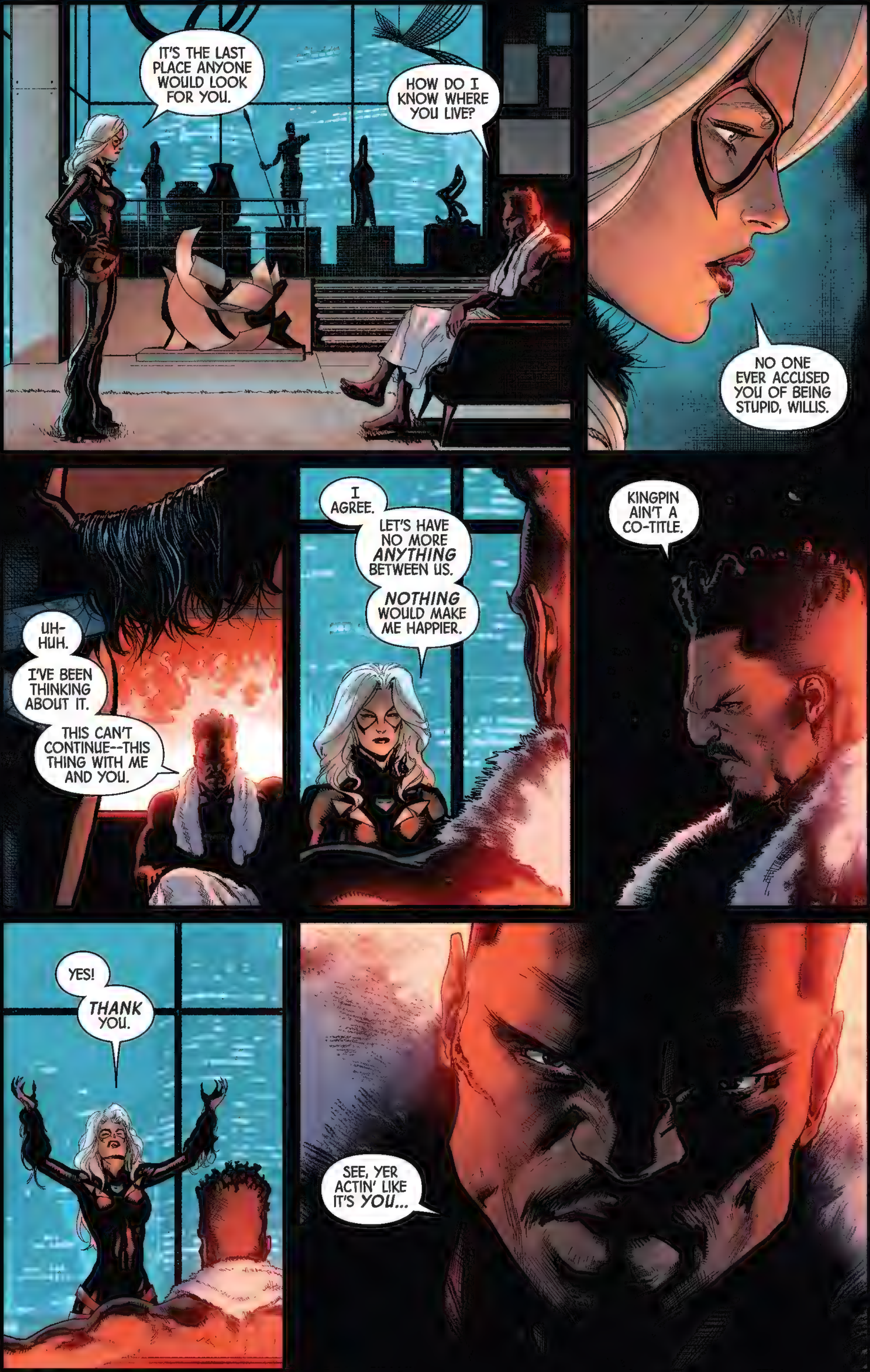

WHAT WAS *THAT?*
UGH!
I DATED BEFORE YOU.
YOU SHOULD TALK: SHE-HULK.
THAT WAS *COMPLETELY* DIFFERENT.
AS OPPOSED TO WHEN?
I'LL DO THE TALKING.
THAT WAS SOLID.
BUT WE HAVE TO GET IN AND OUT OF HERE AND SHE'S NOT *MADE* THAT WAY.
KNOCK KNOCK, RAINDROP.
UHP! I WILL CALL YOU BACK.
A *FAMOUS* PERSON JUST WALKED RIGHT IN MY DOOR.
WHAT?
NO, GOOD LORD, *I'M* MORE FAMOUS THAN HELLSTROM.
LOVE TO SAMSON.
CREEL · MURDOCK
OH.
IF *THIS* IS ABOUT DIAMONDBACK, DARLINGS, TURN *YOUR* BACKS AROUND RIGHT NOW.
GO.
GO ON. TURN AROUND.
NOT JOKING.

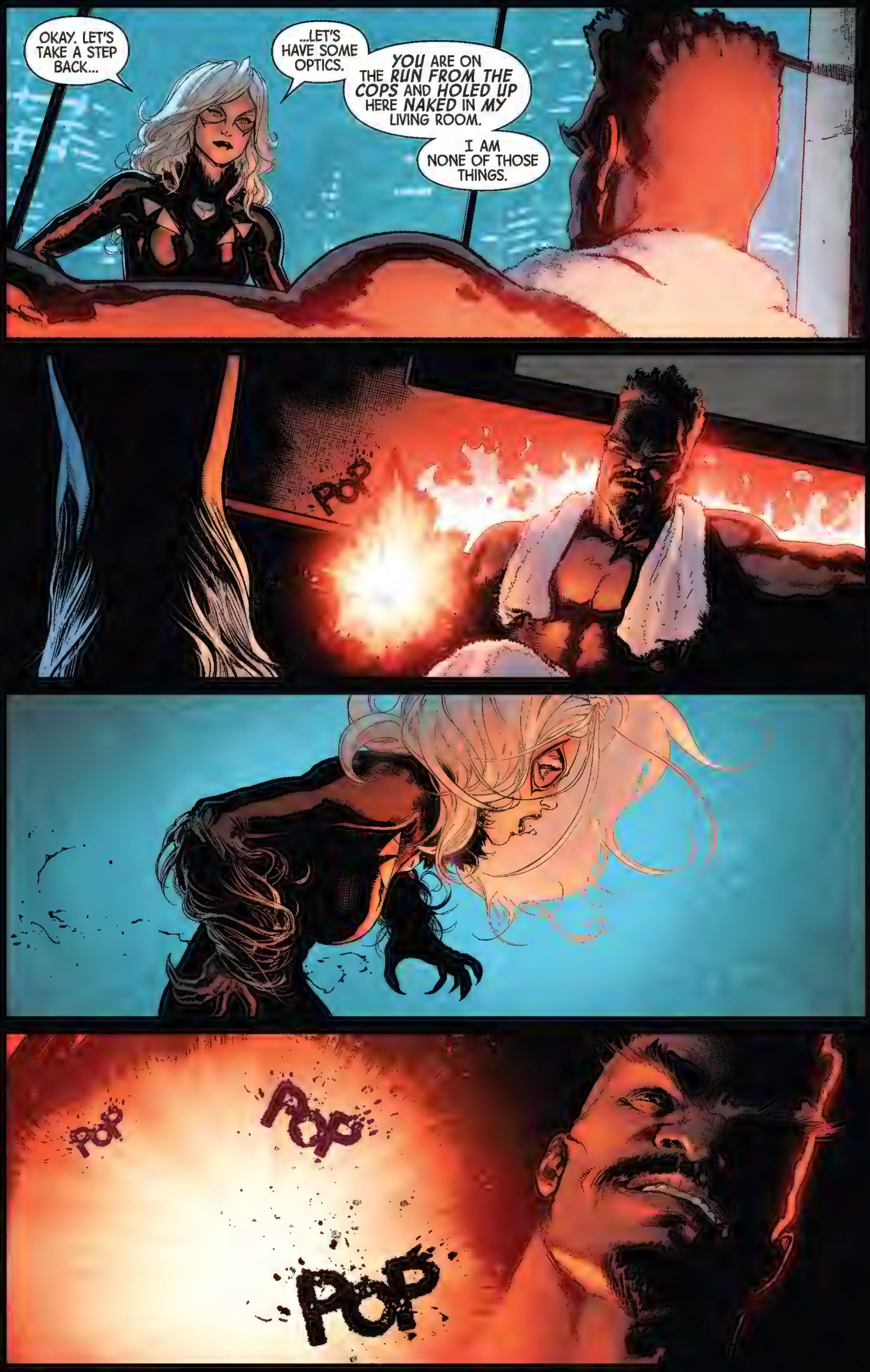

LUKE, *RAINDROP LILLY.*
RAINDROP LILLY, *LUKE CAGE.*
DO WE KNOW EACH OTHER?
(LORD.)
DO PEOPLE *NOT* KNOW THAT QUESTION IS INSULTING EITHER WAY YOU ASK IT?
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE WE ARE.
RAINDROP DOES FAVORS.
I'M A FACILITATOR.
A FACILITATOR.
I FACILITATE.
I INTRODUCE PEOPLE, I PASS ALONG MESSAGES, I ARRANGE MEETINGS.
I MAKE DREAMS A REALITY IN THIS TOPSY-TURVY MUTANT-INHUMAN WORLD.
FOR PEOPLE I LIKE.
FOR FRIENDS.
WHICH *HAS* INCLUDED YOU, ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION, MR. CAGE.
ALTHOUGH WE NEVER INTERACTED FACE-TO-FACE, MY ACTS OF FRIENDSHIP HAVE KEPT *YOU* OUT OF TROUBLE A *FEW* TIMES.
THANKS?
IT *IS* DIAMONDBACK.
HE ESCAPED.
HE'S ON THE LAM.
I KNOW.
YOU'RE HERE *BECAUSE* I KNOW.
I KNOW EVERYTHING.
BUT, MISS JONES, *ON THIS,* YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT TO ASK ME...
...AND I CAN'T RUN MY BUSINESS WITH--
WHO STAKE-HORSED HIM INTO A NEW MULTI-STATE DRUG-TRAFFICKING OPERATION?
I CAN'T, UNDER *ANY* CIRCUMSTANCES, CONTINUE WITH THIS CONVERSATION.
ANYTHING *ELSE* I CAN HELP YOU WITH?
ANY LUCK WITH A *NEW NANNY?*
I DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GET SQUIRREL GIRL BACK FOR WHAT YOU WERE PAYING HER.
RAIN, IT'S IMPORTANT.
HEY, YOU GUYS GOT A COUPLE OF PALS WITH MONEY? GUYS WITH ISLANDS, LIKE *STARK...*
...GO GRAB YOUR KID AND MAYBE GO ON VACATION...LET THIS THING PLAY OUT.
'KAY?
LET IT PLAY *ITSELF* OUT.
NO.
BECAUSE *YOU'RE* THE *DEFENDERS* NOW.
YEAH.
LADY, PEOPLE OUT THERE ARE DYIN' BECAUSE'A POISON THIS GUY'S DROPPIN' ON THE STREET.
I KNOW.
IT'S SAD.
IT'S *ALWAYS* SAD WHEN PEOPLE ARE PREYED ON.
BUT IT *IS* HUMAN NATURE.
GOOD-BYE.

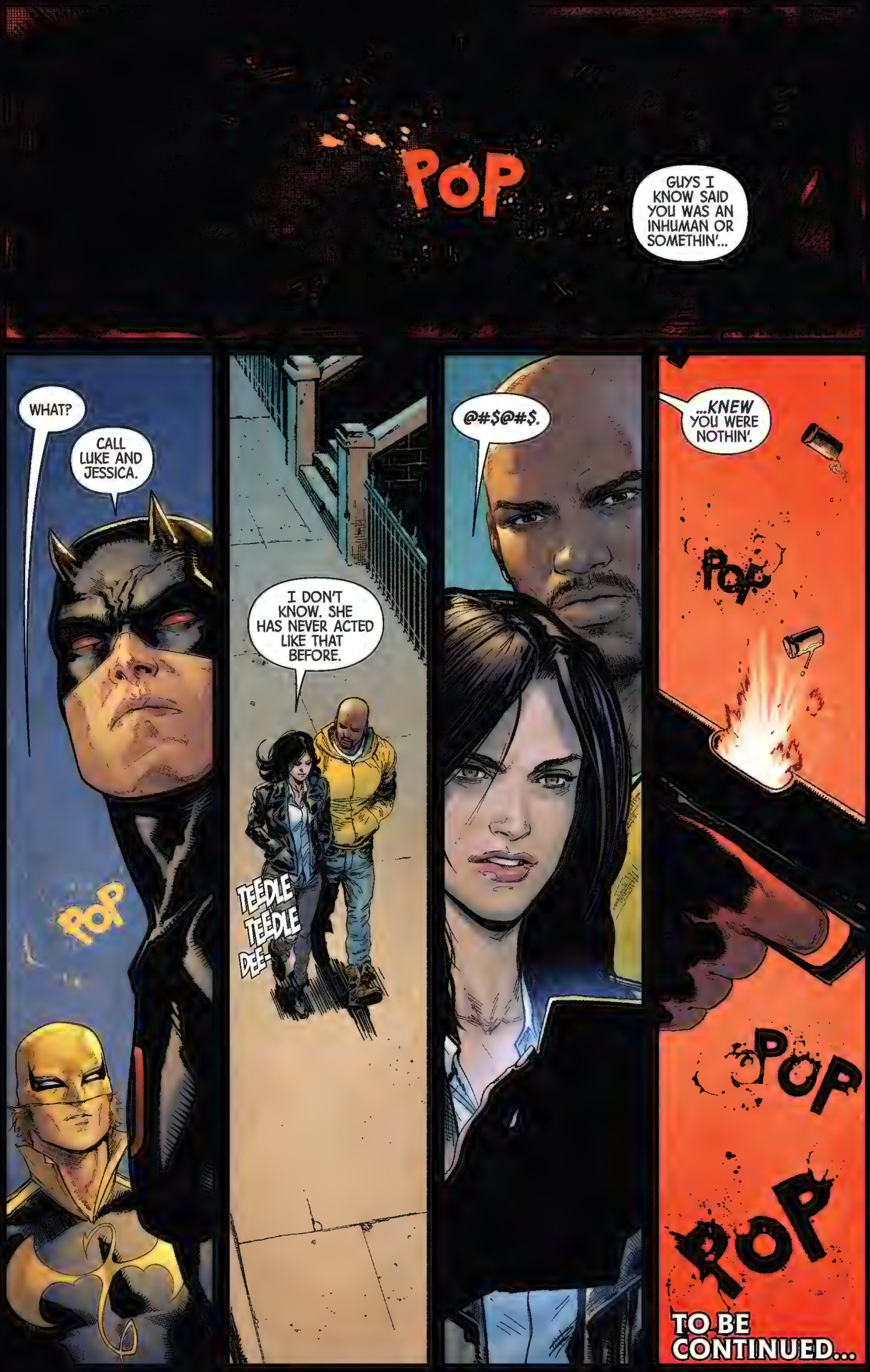

SORRY ABOUT YOUR LOCAL OFFICE.
THAT'S HAPPENED TO ME.
IT'S DEPRESSING AS HELL.
THANKS, GARY.
MY NAME'S NOT GARY.
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WOULD SAY IF YOUR NAME REALLY *WAS* GARY?
YES.
WHY DO YOU WEAR THE MASK?
YOU'RE ACTUALLY WEARING A MASK.
RIGHT NOW.
THIS IS PART OF THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE IMMORTAL IRON FIST.
THIS IS A PART OF A LEGACY UNIFORM.
GREAT.
WHY DO *YOU* WEAR *THAT?*
BECAUSE I WANT TO SCARE EVERY ONE OF THESE PARASITES TO THE DEEP BOTTOM OF THEIR SOULS.
AND I JUST CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT THE MASK.
TOO FAMOUS?
TOO HANDSOME.
SAMESIES.
THE MASK WORKS.
IT *MEANS* SOMETHING TO ME.
AND IT KEEPS MY LOVED ONES SAFE FROM, YOU KNOW...
THAT'S FAIR.
NOW DO THE THING YOU WANTED TO DO.
I WANTED TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANY LEFTOVER ENERGY RESIDUE, OR ANYTHING ELSE FROM THE MISSILE THAT HIT YOUR OFFICE, THAT I COULD TAKE BACK TO--OH.


ELEKTRA NATCHIOS.
WHY WAS ELEKTRA NATCHIOS HERE?
WHO?
WHO IS *THAT?*
OH, *THAT* ELEKTRA.
ELEKTRA! THE ASSASSIN.
SHE TRASHED OUR OFFICE?
SHE'S BEEN IN *HERE.*
RECENTLY.
WITHIN THE LAST HOUR.
HUH.


FELICIA?
HEY, HAMMER.
SORRY, I GOT NOTHIN'.
DIAMONDBACK LEFT TOWN.
MESSAGE RECEIVED.
I'M OFFLINE FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT.
MY BRAIN IS GOING TO POP OUT OF MY HEAD.
BEEN *THERE*.
NIGHT.
MILK?
I THOUGHT I'D MAKE IT A RUNNING GAG WITH US.
NO?
THERE WILL BE **NO** RUNNING ***ANYTHING*** WITH US, DIAMONDBACK.
AND YOU WENT AND TOOK A ***SHOWER***.
YOU USED MY TOWELS.
WOW.
WHAT ***AM I*** DOING IN YOUR APARTMENT?


IT'S THE LAST PLACE ANYONE WOULD LOOK FOR YOU.
HOW DO I KNOW WHERE YOU LIVE?
NO ONE EVER ACCUSED YOU OF BEING STUPID, WILLIS.
UH-HUH.
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT.
THIS CAN'T CONTINUE--THIS THING WITH ME AND YOU.
I AGREE.
LET'S HAVE NO MORE *ANYTHING* BETWEEN US.
NOTHING WOULD MAKE ME HAPPIER.
KINGPIN AIN'T A CO-TITLE.
YES!
THANK YOU.
SEE, YER ACTIN' LIKE IT'S *YOU*...


OKAY. LET'S TAKE A STEP BACK...
...LET'S HAVE SOME OPTICS.
YOU ARE ON THE RUN FROM THE COPS AND HOLED UP HERE NAKED IN MY LIVING ROOM.
I AM NONE OF THOSE THINGS.
POP
POP
POP
POP


POP
GUYS I KNOW SAID YOU WAS AN INHUMAN OR SOMETHIN'...
WHAT?
CALL LUKE AND JESSICA.
POP
I DON'T KNOW. SHE HAS NEVER ACTED LIKE THAT BEFORE.
TEEDLE TEEDLE DEE-
@#$@#$.
...KNEW YOU WERE NOTHIN'.
POP
POP
POP
TO BE CONTINUED...

Good thing cats have nine lives, amirite? Am I? Seriously, am I correct? Does that apply to human people who like to wear a lot of fur? I don't actually know. Anyway, welcome back to the letters page, DEFENDERS readers! Assistant Editor Alanna Smith here to tackle all your pressing questions about the fine publication you hold in your hands.

If you have thoughts you'd like to see printed on this still not-quite-named letters page, email us at MHEROES@MARVEL.COM and mark your letter "Okay to Print." Or, if you'd rather be IN THE NOW, you can tweet us using the hashtags #DefendersComic and #OkToPrint to see your Tweet printed on the Next Issue page.

Now, on to those letters!

What's up, guys?
Getting the gang back together after CIVIL WAR II was awesome to see. I want to first mention how awesome the art is. Marquez and Ponsor are a fantastic collaboration. The art is dynamic and adds value to the story. Bendis is really showing off with this story. In one comic, he has hooked me for an entire series. You guys are going to BLOW THIS OUT OF THE WATER!

Keep it up, guys,
A. Roche

Hey A.! This team sure can put a pretty book together, huh? Wait 'til you see the crazy sequence they're pulling together for #6–it will BLOW YOUR MIND.

A suggestion for the DEFENDERS letters page title: Public Defenders.

John Wilkey

Hm...I'm not ready to put a ring on it just yet, John, but we'll keep it in the mix!

Wow, loved DEFENDERS #1. It was Defendtastic. This really gets me excited for the next issue and for the Defenders Netflix show. Great writing and awesome art.

Shane Detert

I'm *answering* these while waiting to watch a screening of *Defenders* tonight and I'm climbing the walls waiting for it–glad the book's made you excited and not just SUPER IMPATIENT like me! I'M SO AMPED.

Hi.

I just finished reading DEFENDERS #4 and I couldn't overlook that Alanna is looking for a name for the letters page.

I've been digging deep inside my mind and I think I came with something that might be considerable, at best. So, what about DEFENDIN' DELIVERY? You can thank me later. By the way, the Defenders rock!

From Michal Vamos,
Czech Republic

Now I've got images in my head of the Defenders aggressively protecting mailmen and I love it a little bit.

DEFENDERS has been great so far! As for a letters page name, how about "De Senders"?

Lex Pendragon

I think the De Senders are the archnemeses of the mailman-protecting Defenders–making sure that mail will NEVER REACH ITS DESTINATION.

Brian M. Bendis,

When you say Diamondback is back, and nobody confuses him (a villain even I've never heard of or read before) with the Captain America Diamondback GF–unrealistic! How did Jessica Jones, for one, even know anything about Diamondback, who's supposedly been dead for years? She's been reading Luke's "great big book of dead former villains"? And this team acted like a team before they even talked about being a team! In fact, they still haven't really chosen a name. But I guess it helps that Luke, Iron Fist and maybe Daredevil have a little bit of history with the OG Defenders...Black Cat, too; maybe she'll turn on Diamondback next issue, help Luke join the D team? I don't think it was ever covered exactly why BC even became a villain again?

But you know me, right? You gotta sift through the negative to get to the positive! And there were positives here. Luke and Jess are probably back together again! DD is on the team he should've always been on! The D-listers have a new mission statement!

Much needed! And hey, don't be shy about admitting new members; these four can always be the core team, right? Great cover. This all may be just what the Defenders need.

Cheers,
Andrew J. Shaw

Actually, Andrew, Matt Murdock STILL thinks everyone's talking about the Diamondback who dated Captain America, and is wondering when her voice got so low and gravelly.

OMG!!! Just read THE DEFENDERS #4 and it was off the hook!!! This just keeps getting better and better by the page! This artwork alone is so incredible. Major props to Bendis, Marquez and Ponsor for their astounding work! Can't wait to see the dankness of issue #5 next month! You have a major supporting fan in St. Louis!

Otis McClure

Otis!!! Did issue #5 live up to your expectations? I must know! I MUST KNOW!

Hey Alanna,

The wait was worth it. Bendis back on Daredevil, my favorite Marvel character, in the coolest streetwise super hero team in Hell's Kitchen. What more could we want?

This is such a top creative team–Bendis, Marquez, Ponsor and Petit–that they can even pull off cheesy scenes, like the 4-panel, in-your-face center spread, with aplomb. Their passion shines throughout the comic and on into the extra-value back matter. I love these little Bendis touches; an in-depth Ben Urich interview with Luke Cage peppered with fantastic pin-ups from Luke's checkered past. My faves were Jason Latour's "Be a True Power Man" and the fabulous '70s Jim Brown Hero for Hire look by the late-greats Cockrum & Buckler & the not-so-late Mounts. I hope you can keep these extra surprises coming in the back pages.

I thought I was reading the wrap-up of the Diamondback arc but the To Be Continued... and Stryker sharing a prison-bound truck with the Punisher...and Elektra lurking on rooftops...means this storyline ain't done yet. I'm enjoying the ride.

Prospective letters page titles:
Fess up with Jess
Puke on Luke
Chat with Matt
Defenestrating with the Defenders
or how about Defenders of the Faith?

Cheers,
Bruce Marsh
Newbury Park
England

Thanks for the nice words, Bruce! But between "Defenestrating with the Defenders" and "Puke on Luke," I worry you're expecting a very different kind of letter column!

"Defend This!"

Love,
Danny O'Cadiz
Denver, CO

Between the confrontational letters page suggestion and the affectionate sign off, this short letter was quite a roller coaster, Danny!

That's all we've got room for this time! Keep sending in your letters page suggestions, and come back next month for more daring defending!

-Honorary Defender Alanna Smith

NEXT!

@m_perljam
The Pulse Luke Cage interview in DEFENDERS #1 was brilliant - a unique way to delve into a comic book character. #Defenderscomic

@dumfunerals
Bendis' #Defenderscomic is destroying me right now. Danny & Jessica kicking all kinds of ass, plus the neverending team banter!

@Skyward_Link
on the edge of my seat; amazing use of colors in each page #Defenderscomic

@ImmaNightwing
#Defenderscomic is a great creative team at their very best! Every issue is an absolute treasure to behold.

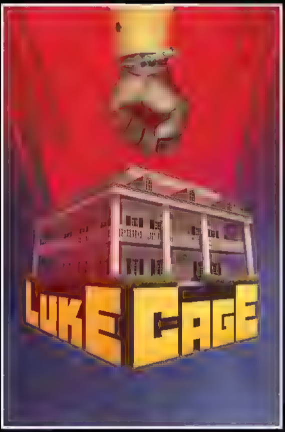
@bruso_tyler
#Defenderscomic continues to excellent. Brilliant storytelling from both the writing and art. Looking forward to more.

@jasonreyes00
The Punisher trying to get free from Cage's grip is the funniest thing I have read in a comic in a long while. #Defenderscomic

@Man_of_Feelz
I am finally reading #Defenderscomic, and what a great start! The art is beautiful and these street heroes have great chemistry!

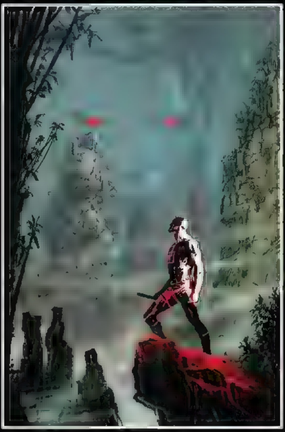
DEFENDERS #6

ALL ON SALE THIS MONTH!

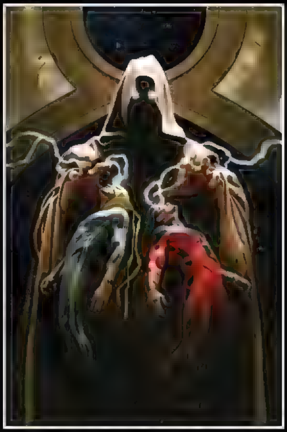


LUKE CAGE #5

JESSICA JONES #12

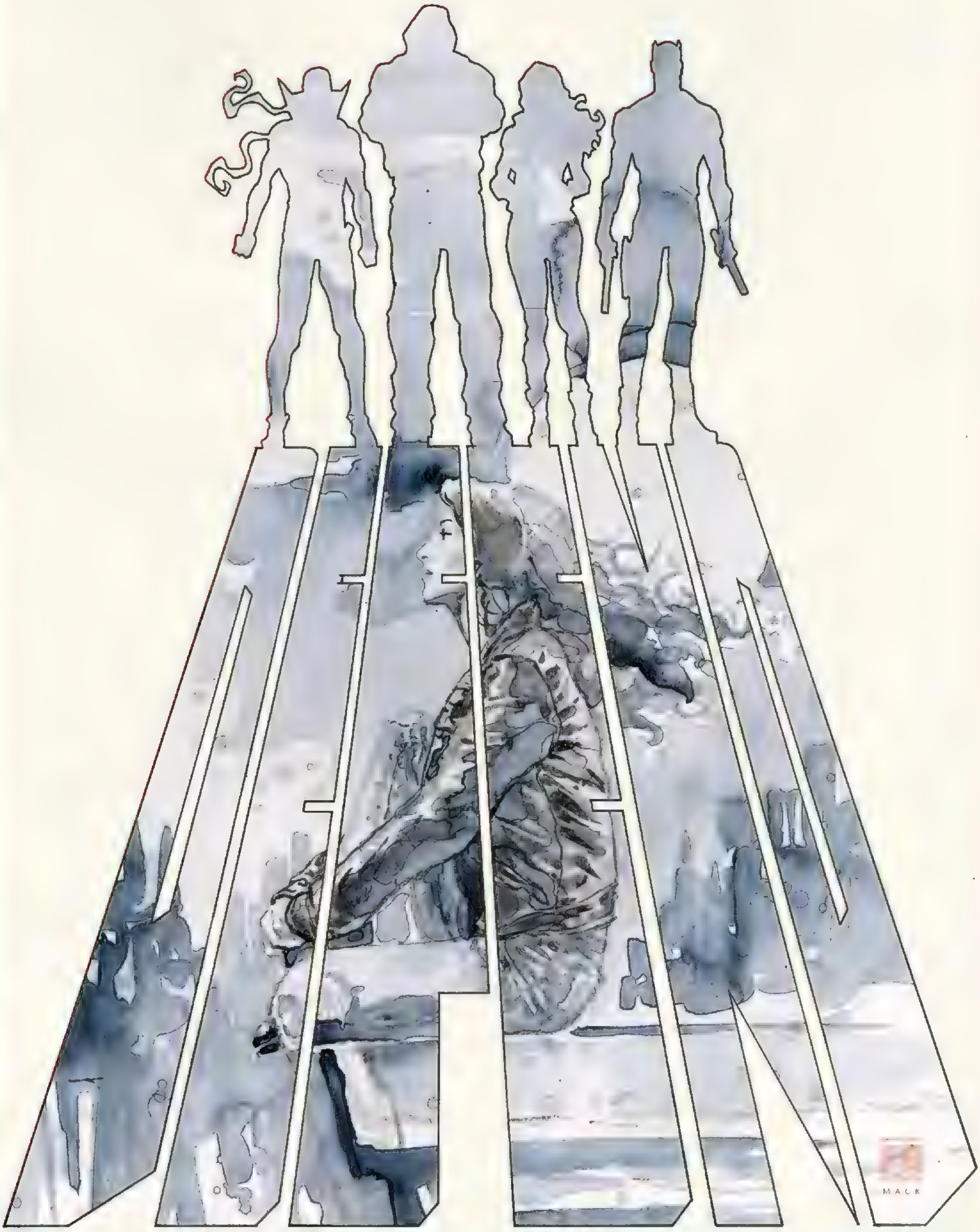


DAREDEVIL #26



IRON FIST #7

We want to hear from you! Send your letters to MHEROES@MARVEL.COM marked "OKAY TO PRINT," or tweet us using the hashtags #DefendersComic and #OKtoprint for a chance to see your tweet printed in future issues!



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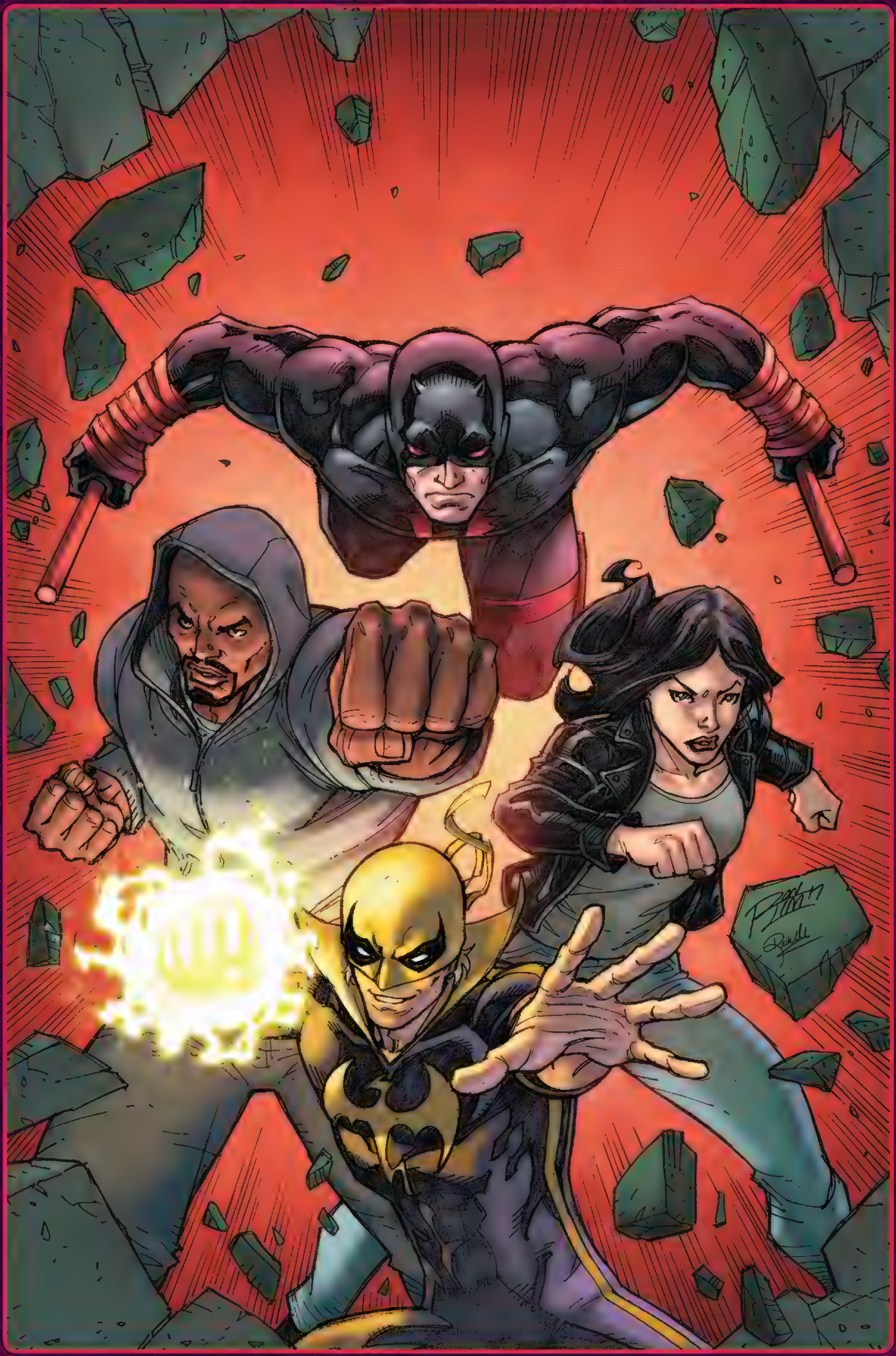
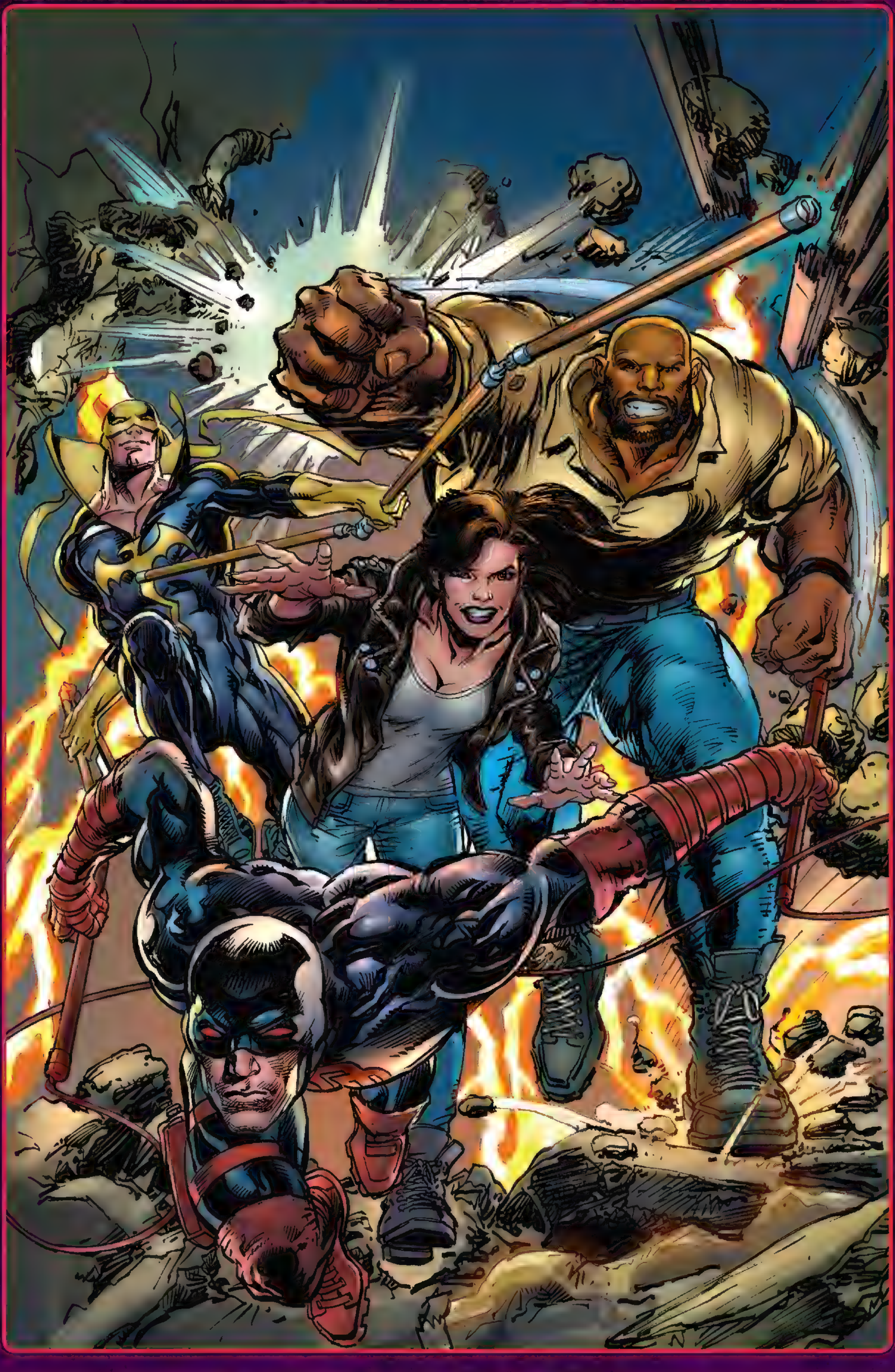
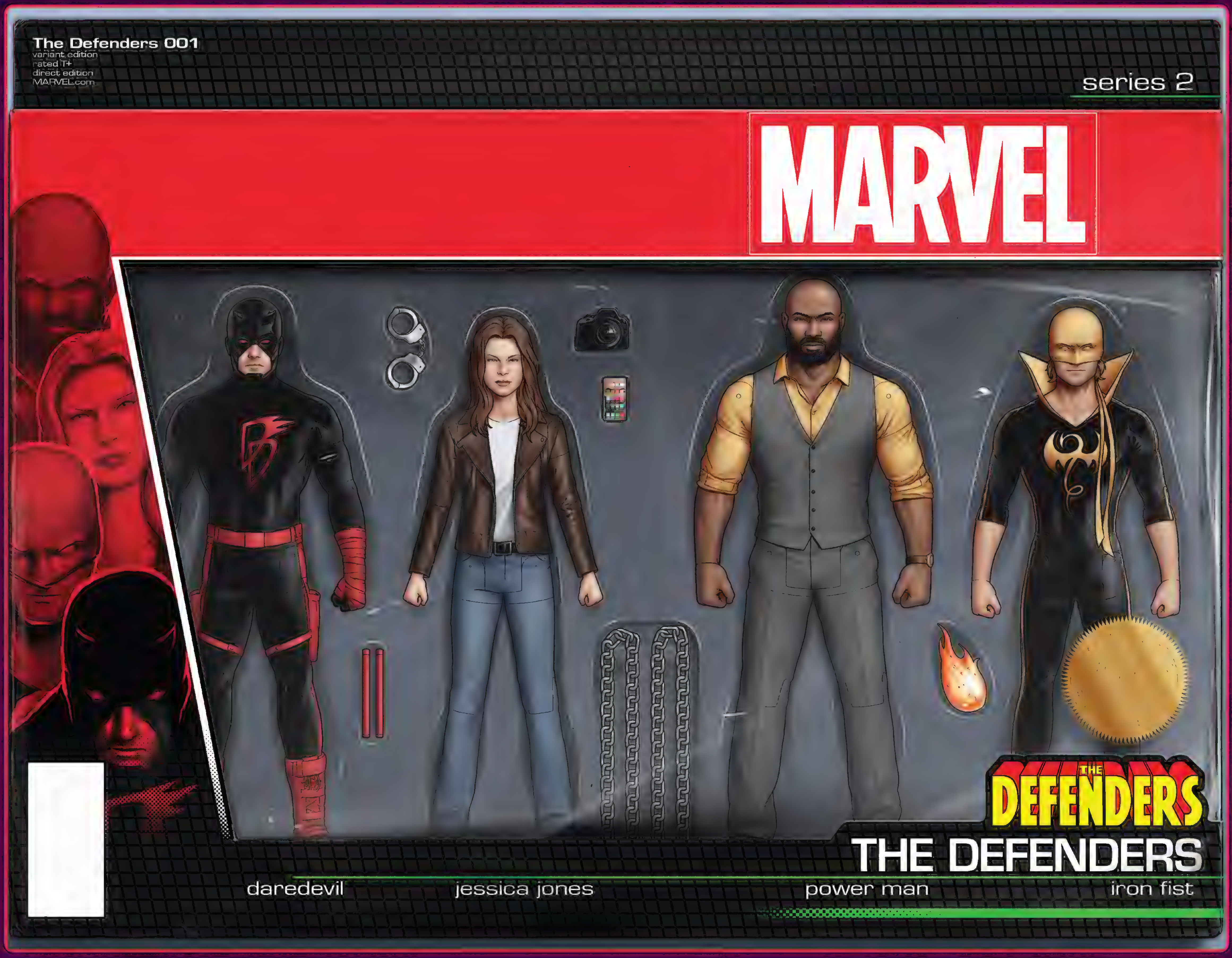
NO. 1 VARIANT BY **SKOTTIE YOUNG**



NO. 1 VARIANT BY **RON LIM** & **RACHELLE ROSENBERG**



NO. 1 VARIANT BY **NEAL ADAMS** & **PAUL MOUNTS**


The Defenders 001
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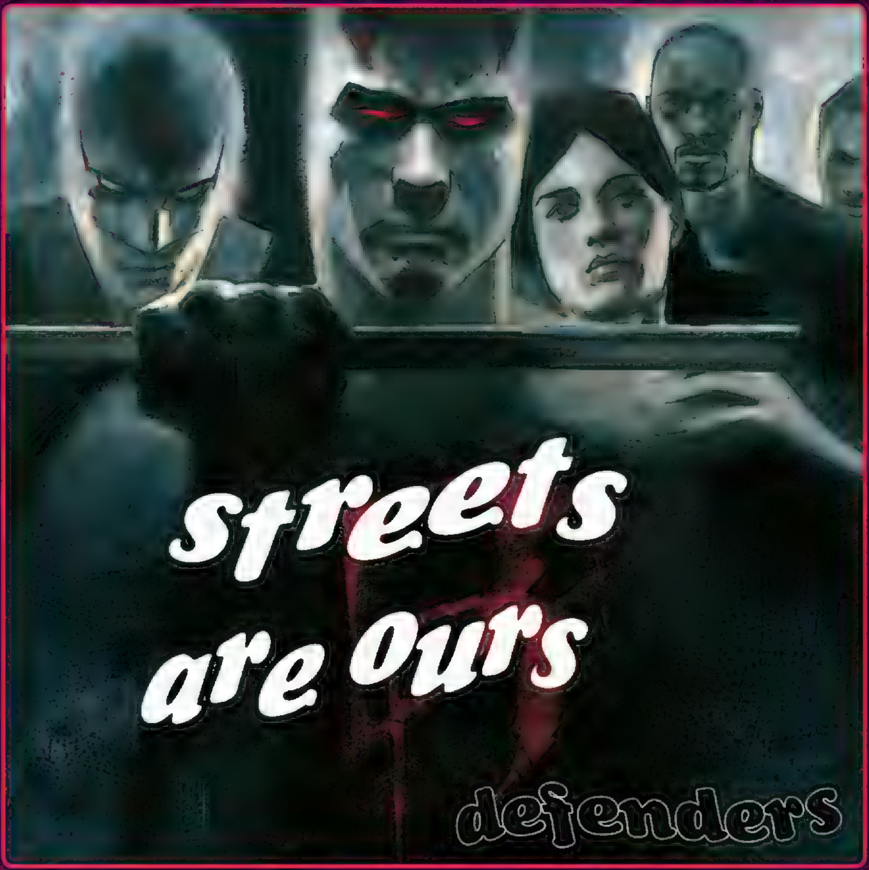
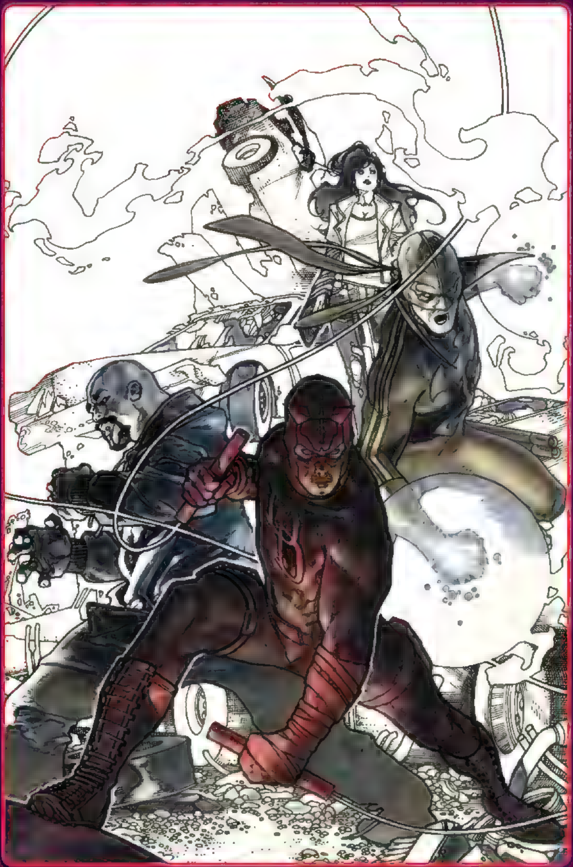
series 2
MARVEL
THE DEFENDERS
THE DEFENDERS
daredevil
jessica jones
power man
iron fist

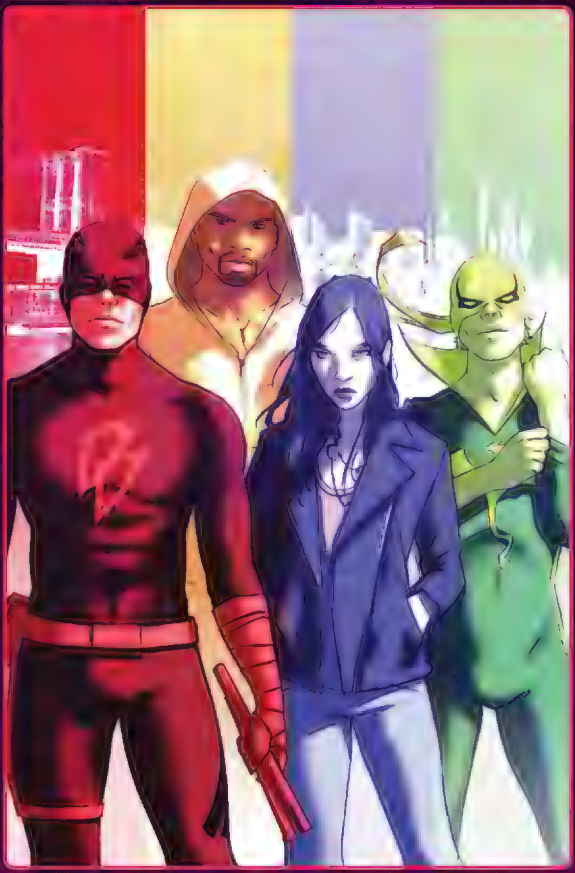
NO. 1 ACTION FIGURE VARIANT BY **JOHN TYLER CHRISTOPHER**


streets
are ours
defenders

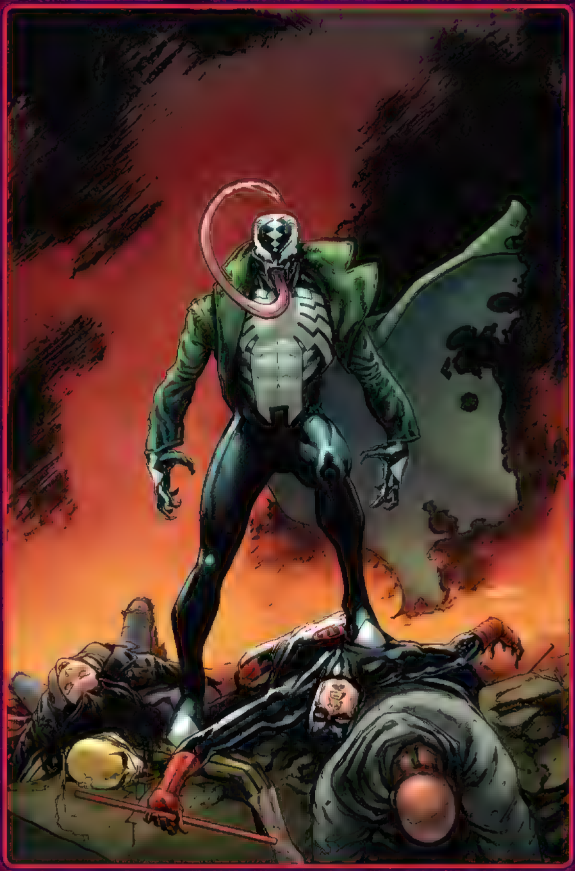
NO. 1 HIP-HOP VARIANT BY **ALEX MALEEV**



NO. 2 VARIANT BY **SIMONE BIANCHI**



NO. 3 VARIANT BY **W. SCOTT FORBES**



NO. 5 VENOMIZED VILLAINS VARIANT BY **DAVID MARQUEZ** & **RACHELLE ROSENBERG**

DAREDEVIL, THE HERO I NEED

THE PULSE

By Joe Robertson, Editor in Chief

Designed By Manny Mederos
Art By Alex Maleev

New York City.

We are lousy with super heroes.

Every day, as editor in chief of one of the largest newspapers in the entire world, I receive voluminous updates on numerous super hero activities throughout the city, the country and the world.

So why can't I stop thinking about Daredevil?

There has been many a night--and I know so many of you will sympathize with this--that I have slept on the couch in my office because I looked outside my window to see the traffic backed up down Fifth Avenue for as far as the eye can see. On the far, far end of the miles-and-miles-long parade of cars, you can clearly see the firefight of super heroes stopping someone from doing something. I remind myself that whatever stopped traffic that bad was probably going to do something far worse if not for our citywide surplus of super-powers. No matter how you look at it, it's better to be sitting alive in your car (or couch) than dead and vaporized by Doctor Doom's death ray you didn't even see coming.

Then there's the little things: I have caught myself worrying about Spider-Man if he doesn't swing by my office at least twice a day.

That is what it's like to live in New York City.

Every kind of super hero you can think of finds their way here. I don't know why. But 99 percent of them are here. The biggest question is why is 99 percent of the super-criminal activity is ALSO located here. Why are you here where all the super heroes live? We'll put a pin in that for another editorial.

But, with all this...why can't I stop thinking about Daredevil?

I keep asking myself: Why is there a man in a devil costume running around the shadows of Hell's Kitchen--even though I believe he is the only one that still calls it Hell's Kitchen? Why does every police blotter and eyewitness report that I have read about him seem go out of its way to point out Daredevil was "badly hurt" doing whatever he was doing?

Police and eyewitnesses all comment about the cuts and bruises and blood. If Daredevil has powers, they are certainly not in the Hulk/Thor/Thing category. He doesn't even seem close to the Spider-Man category. This very well may be an ordinary man dressed as the devil going out every night doing whatever he can to scare the crap out of the bad people so the good people can get a good night's sleep.

Why do I keep thinking about Daredevil?

Because I wish I was him.

This city is a mess. This country is a mess. We are more divided now than we thought possible. And with that comes insulation. People stop enjoying going out. People stop enjoying interaction. People stay home. People make their own entertainment. We cower in fear and start resenting each other for it.

Except people like this Daredevil.

He goes out and makes the world a better place, and he doesn't seem to have much to back it up. Nothing but sheer force of will.

I wish that instead of sitting here wondering if I locked all the doors, I had the courage to stand outside my house and guard my neighbors. I wish my next-door neighbor, a fellow I'm quite fond of, had the courage to guard me as well. I wish we all had each other's backs. I wish all of us had the desire to bleed a little bit for our fellow person's well-being.

Arguments about vigilantism will never go away. There have been those who will take the law into their own hands for as long as there has been man and law. I decided to abandon the argument and instead focus my attention on admiring those worth admiring.

I sometimes wonder how many times my life has been saved by people like Daredevil without my ever even knowing. According to Chief of Crime Control Strategies Richard Cheek, criminal activity in that area of the city is at a historic low. Thank you to the police, thank you to the FBI, the agents of S.H.I.E.L.D., the EMTs and security guards, but I think some of us might owe Daredevil more thanks than we think.

Until the streets are safe and the local authorities finally get this city under peaceful control, until we can stand together and protect each other...

Thank you, Daredevil.

I wish I was you.

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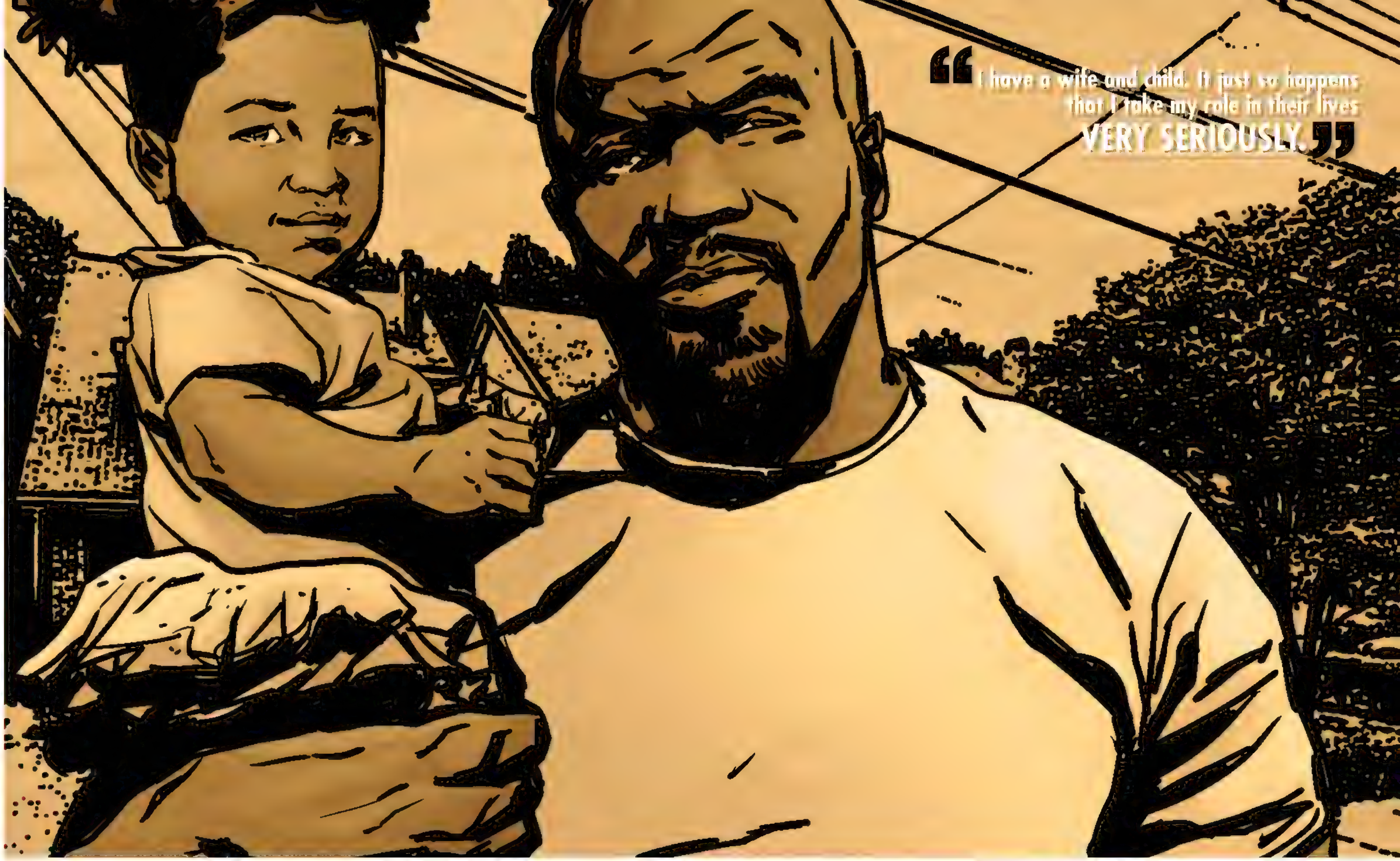
A version of this editorial appears in print on April 20, on Page A22 of *The Daily Bugle*. Today's Paper | Subscribe

LUKE CAGE

THE PULSE interview

By Benjamin Urich

Designed By Manny Mederos



"I have a wife and child. It just so happens that I take my role in their lives VERY SERIOUSLY."

Art by: Michael Gaydos & Matt Hollingsworth

Luke Cage.

Of the seemingly endless list of people who have taken on the role of protector of this city, this country, this planet and beyond...Luke Cage, for all of his in-your-face bravado, is actually one of the least controversial and most beloved members of the super-powered community.

According to a recent *Daily Bugle*/Gallup poll, Luke Cage is actually the People's Choice to run for mayor of the City of New York–a role Cage is quick to reject. "Not my world" is all he had to say on the subject.

Maybe it's because Luke Cage's story is, oddly, an American story of survival. Carl Lucas grew up on the mean streets of Harlem, only to find himself in prison for a crime it has since been proven he did not commit. In prison, as part of an illegal experiment, Carl Lucas, against his will, underwent a procedure that gave him what the government labels "omega-event-level super-strength" and his signature unbreakable skin. He left prison a changed man in every conceivable way, and has since dedicated each day of his life to doing everything he can for anyone who needs him. Some people even pay for the privilege. Luke Cage has been an Avenger, a Defender and, of course, a founding member of Heroes for Hire. A man has to eat.

After a handful of recent salacious tabloid headlines, some perpetrated by this very organization, I sat down with Cage to talk about his career and what's next for those of us who live down in the mean streets of the five boroughs.

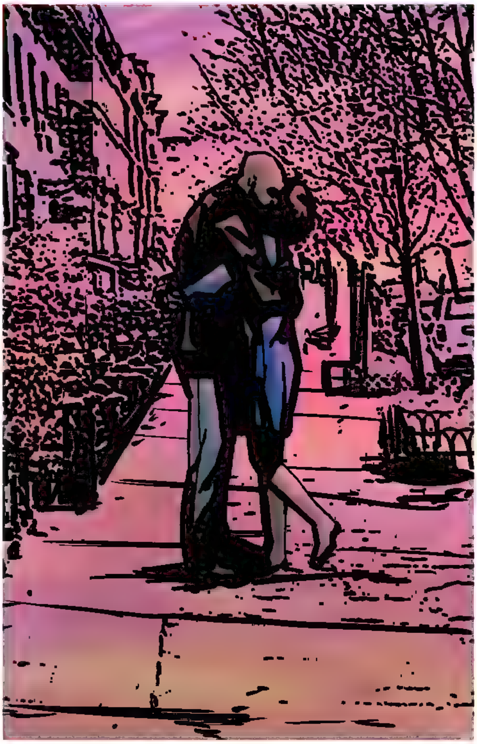
BEN URICH
Luke Cage. According to my research, this is the first sit-down interview you have given in many years...

LUKE CAGE
Yes. I'm not--a lot of people run to the press to ensure they're being heard. I get that. I guess it was the way I was raised--words can be cheap. All that matters is action. You see a lot of politicians saying one thing and doing another, and still, in this day and age where these lies are so obvious, people still fall for them. I can't stand it. I thought the best way was to not participate in the nonsense, allow my actions to speak for themselves. It works most of the time.

BEN URICH
What convinced you to sit down with me today?

LUKE CAGE
Well, a couple of things. Number one is... There have been some headlines about me and my wife, and they were painting a picture that was the direct opposite of the truth. A good friend of mine pointed out that no matter what I think my silence means, it is interpreted by most as non-denial... If I'm not denying it, it must be true. No one knows that I'm choosing to ignore it because it's stupid. So I thought I would come here and tell people that it's stupid.

BEN URICH
So I take it you're here to say you're not having an affair...


Art by: Michael Gaydos & Matt Hollingsworth

LUKE CAGE
Perfect example. I'm out on the street, speaking to a longtime colleague of mine, like a war buddy... we hug goodbye, someone takes a picture of the hug from a distance...and it looks like I'm macking on some lady in broad daylight. What bothers me about this is, of course, it's not true. I have a wife and child. It just so happens that I take my role in their lives very seriously. I take my role as an African-American man in the public eye very seriously. Someone else used me to make money...with a lie. I guess I can put up with people using us to make money if it's the truth, but this is the opposite. I don't like being painted as something that I find abhorrent. And the flip side is, I know by denying it, I might sound guilty too. I know this. But I have to tell the truth.

BEN URICH
You and Jessica Jones are still together...

LUKE CAGE
Yes.

BEN URICH
You have a lovely daughter.

LUKE CAGE
Yes. Thank you.

BEN URICH
How is fatherhood?

LUKE CAGE
Fatherhood. True story, I once got into a good old-fashioned street fight with Dr. Doom...

BEN URICH
And fatherhood is scarier?

LUKE CAGE
You beat me to the punchline! (laughs)

BEN URICH
How is raising a family, doing what you do?

LUKE CAGE
Ask me in ten years. Is it any different than a cop or a fireman, a federal agent or S.H.I.E.L.D. agent with a family? It's a scary job. But I come home every day, so far, and if I've done it right, I've left the world better than I found it. So does my wife. So does my best friend. My feeling is, if we do that every day, then the world my daughter is going to grow up in will be far better than the one my wife and I grew up in, which, in fact, sucked. I'm not alone in this, but I live by the idea that if everyone woke up one morning and decided to actively be the best version of themselves, or just do their job exceptionally well, the entire world would shift immediately into something–well, frankly, something we all deserve. Right?

BEN URICH
Fair enough. It's just a very unique thing for your community.

LUKE CAGE
What's that now?

BEN URICH
Other than the Fantastic Four, you don't see many public displays of family in the super hero--

LUKE CAGE
Well, that's not true. The Avengers are a family. The Defenders are a family. The X-Men? Most of the super hero community

tends to gravitate toward each other, because we came from broken homes or disappointing homes or just bad homes. While we're pulling ourselves up out of the sludge, we meet other people like us and we end up really bonding with each other and helping each other, lifting each other up–then all of a sudden, you turn around and you have a family. I built my family. Danny Rand is my family. He is my brother. Daredevil is family. Literally, I'd do anything for these people. Anything. It's one of the great surprises of doing this–that you get to meet the other people who inspire you and you get to see how amazing they are in real life. These people understand me on levels that other people might not, because we share a common experience. It's cool to have super-powers, it is. I'm not ever going to be one of those people that complains about my power and the responsibility it brings. But, like everything, it comes with its own problems, and you still want to complain about work to your peers. Especially if that work includes getting punched in the side of the head by a cosmically enhanced Doctor Doom. You're going to want to have a friendly, trustworthy ear. It's nice to have that. I know I sound like one of those billionaires whining about

Art by: Mike Mayhew

Art by: Olivier Coipel, Mark Morales,
& José Villarrubia

BE A
TRUE
POWER
MAN
AFTER
Romita
BUSCEMA
McFARLANE

Art by: Jason Latour

tax reform, but when you have super-powers, there are still concerns.

BEN URICH
The safety of those around you--

LUKE CAGE
Number one concern.

BEN URICH
There's been a lot of talk recently about vigilantism and the role of the costumed hero--

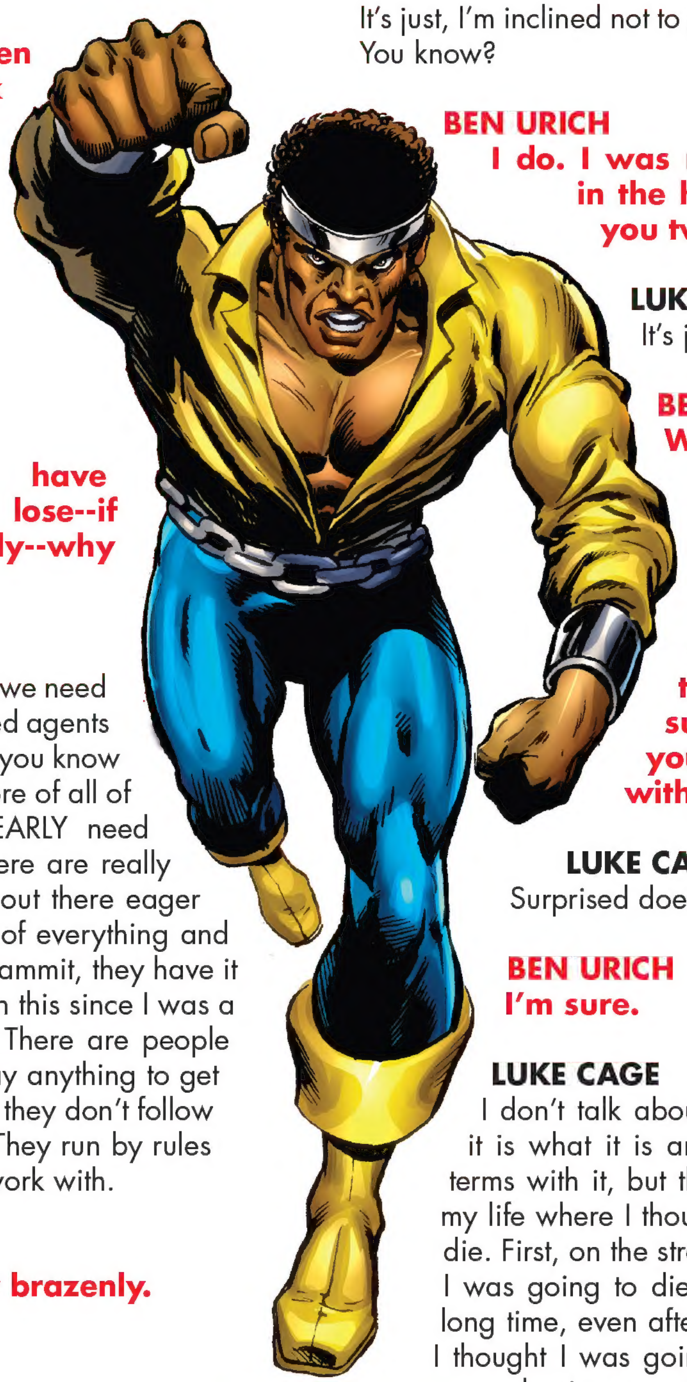
LUKE CAGE
There always is.

BEN URICH
So if you have something to lose--if you have family--why do it?

LUKE CAGE
We need cops and we need firemen and we need agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. And you know what? We need more of all of them. But we CLEARLY need more than that. There are really dangerous people out there eager to take advantage of everything and anyone because, dammit, they have it coming. I have seen this since I was a baby. I know this. There are people who will do and say anything to get "what's theirs" and they don't follow any kind of code. They run by rules the police cannot work with.

BEN URICH
Sometimes very brazenly.

LUKE CAGE
Right?



Art by: Dave Cockrum, Rich Buckler, & Paul Mounts

BEN URICH
Recently, a character that calls himself Diamondback has been making some bold moves. A blast from your past.

LUKE CAGE
You mind if we don't talk about that?

BEN URICH
Okay.

LUKE CAGE
It's just, I'm inclined not to give that guy press. You know?

BEN URICH
I do. I was more interested in the history between you two.

LUKE CAGE
It's just that.

BEN URICH
What?

LUKE CAGE
It's history.

BEN URICH
Okay, today then. Are you surprised to find yourself "married with children"?

LUKE CAGE
Surprised doesn't quite cover it.

BEN URICH
I'm sure.

LUKE CAGE
I don't talk about it much because it is what it is and I have come to terms with it, but there was a time in my life where I thought I was going to die. First, on the streets. Then I thought I was going to die in jail. And for a long time, even after I got my powers, I thought I was going to just die from having something this unnatural done to my body. So for a good long period of my life I thought I was going of die. It's probably why I appreciate how lucky I am–

[Luke Cage pauses for over three minutes. In this time he does nothing but actively control his breathing and look out the window. Eventually, composed, he returns to the conversation as if no time has gone by at all.]

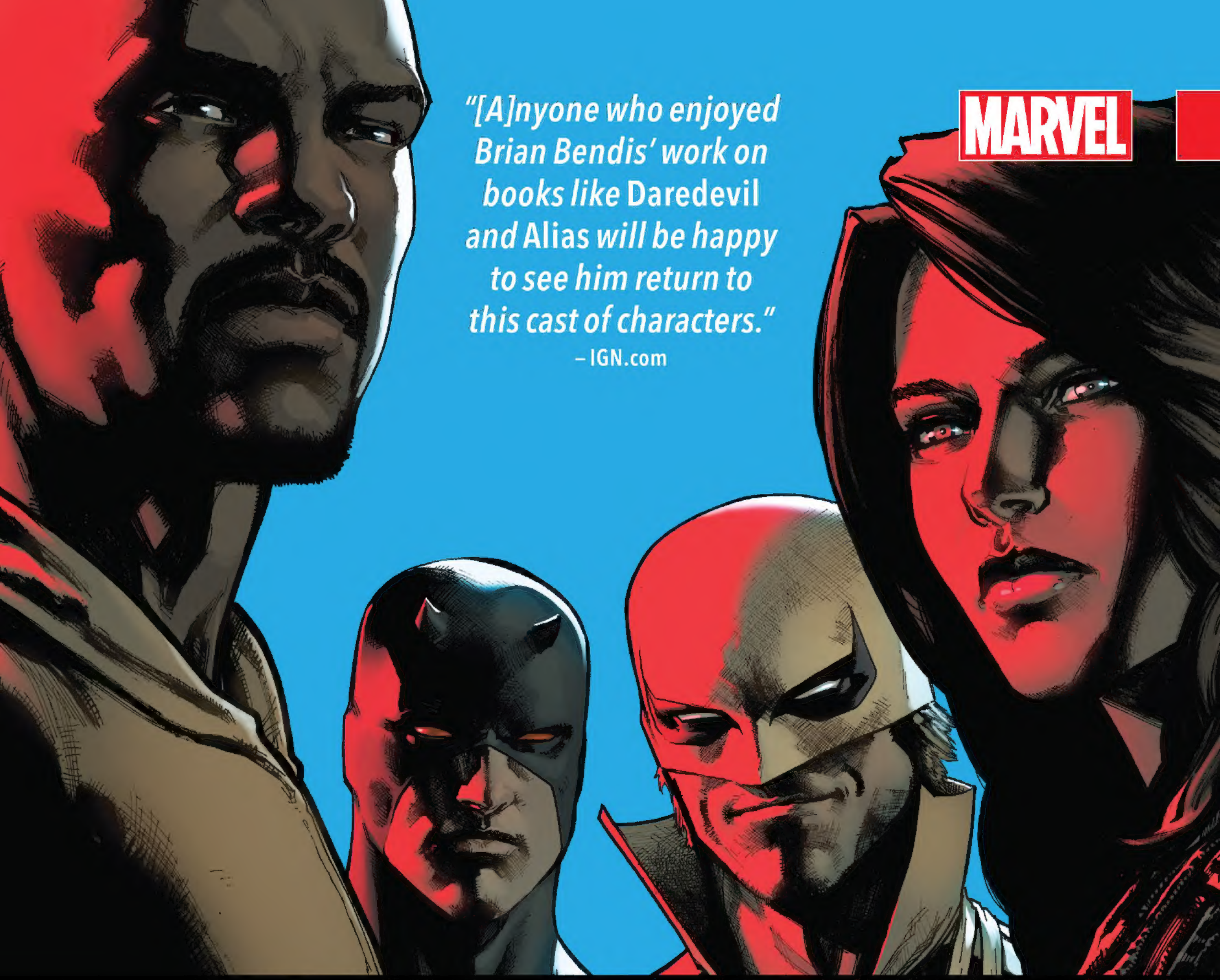
LUKE CAGE
What was the question?

BEN URICH
How has fatherhood been treating you?

[Luke Cage laughs. He realizes the question got the best of him. An omega-level super hero done in by the oldest of concerns.]

Obviously, this story is... to be continued.

Art by: Leinil Francis Yu



MARVEL

"[A]nyone who enjoyed Brian Bendis' work on books like Daredevil *and* Alias *will be happy to see him return to this cast of characters."*

– IGN.com

DAREDEVIL! LUKE CAGE! JESSICA JONES! IRON FIST!

INDIVIDUALLY, THESE FOUR heroes have been on the front lines of countless battles to keep the city safe and secure. But now, with a deadly enemy from the past making a major move to unite the underworld, they must become more — they must be Defenders! If the streets weren't mean enough already, they get more dangerous than ever when the Punisher sets his sights on his fellow vigilantes! As chaos threatens to engulf New York, can this group of socially maladjusted heroes trust each other enough to function as a team? Or will the power vacuum caused by the Kingpin's absence lead to all-out gang war?

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